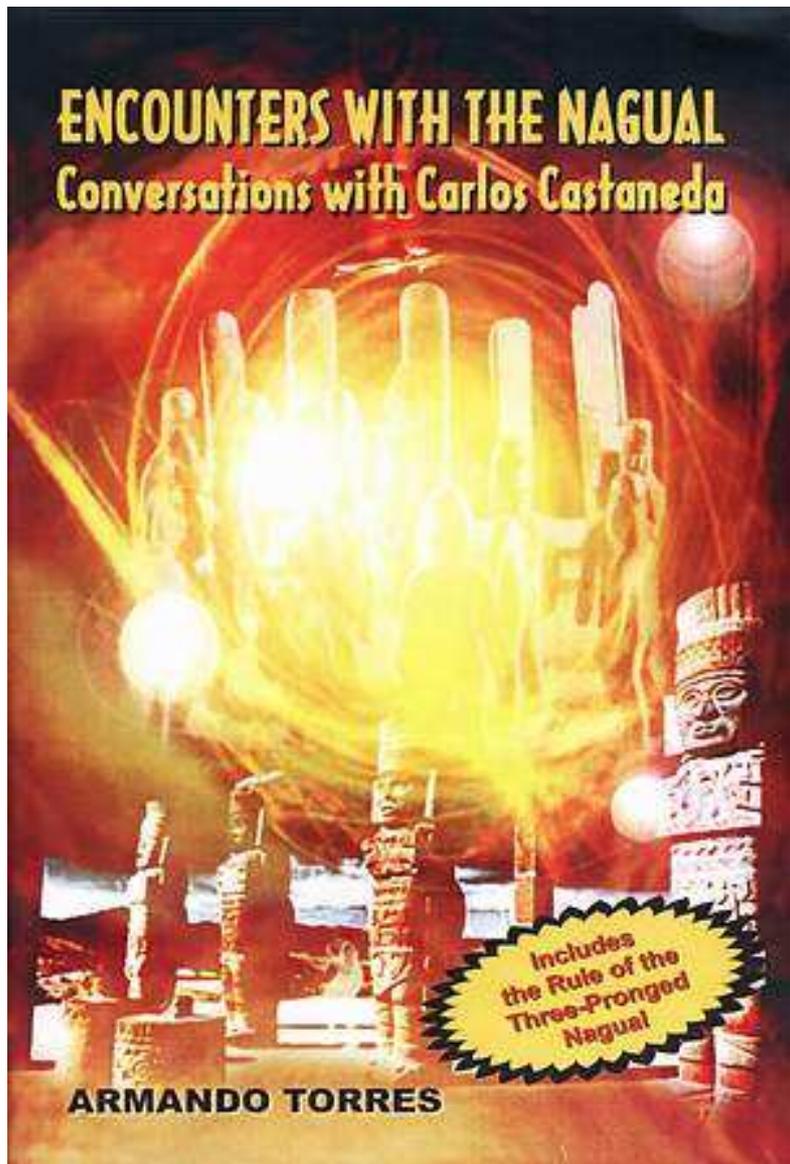


ENCOUNTERS WITH THE NAGUAL
Conversations with Carlos Castaneda



Includes
the Rule of the
Three-Pronged
Nagual

ARMANDO TORRES

ENCOUNTERS WITH THE NAGUAL

Conversations with

Carlos Castaneda

ENCOUNTERS WITH THE NAGUAL

ARMANDO TORRES

FIRST LIGHT PRESS

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I would like to express my gratitude to all those who have helped me on my path, and especially to Carlos Castaneda, for bringing a sense of beauty and purpose to my life.

I dedicate this book to all those who know what am talking about.

Armando Torres

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PREFACE

I first got to know Armando when we met by chance in a place of power in the mountains of central Mexico. We felt an immediate, spontaneous friendship between us, and the subject of the conversation which ensued inspired me to tell him that I had had the privilege of knowing Carlos Castaneda. Armando told me that he also knew him, and that he had written a book about his teachings.

I became very curious and asked him to tell me more about it. He seemed uninterested, saying that this was not the appropriate time. I didn't insist, since I was just getting to know him.

In the course of many years of friendship, he mentioned the topic a few times, but always in reference to some other subject we were discussing. Even when I had made friends with "those who walk over there", it is only now that I have access to his work.

When I read the manuscript for the first time, I became profoundly excited, since it allowed me to comprehend one of the most obscure premises in Carlos' teaching - what he called "The Portion of the Rule for the Three-pronged Nagual", a project for the renewal of the lineages of knowledge on a global scale.

He assured me that Carlos had ordered him to make this information known, and asked me to support him in the execution of this task. However, since the manuscript was quite short (some thirty pages), I suggested that he supplement it with a description of some of the numerous lectures by Castaneda which Armando had attended.

Agreeing to my proposal, he selected a selection of teachings which Carlos had presented, either in public lectures or in private conversations. To make them easier to read, he grouped them according to content rather than putting them in chronological

order. In some instances, he also had to reconstruct the conversations. Carlos had an extremely emphatic way of speaking and transmitted much of the information through gestures and facial expressions, and enjoyed mixing personal stories and all manner of observations with his teachings.

As an extraordinary gift, at the end of the book Armando added a brief account of his own experience with another group of sorcery practitioners.

Due to the simplicity and sincerity of its narrative, this book has a power that I have not found in any other work related to the subject. For that reason, it is a great pleasure for me to be able to help Armando in the task of publishing it. I am certain that it will be highly appreciated by all those who love the work of Carlos Castaneda.

Juan Yoliliztli

INTRODUCTION

My name is Armando Torres. I have written this book in order to complete a task that was assigned to me years ago.

In October 1984, I met Carlos Castaneda, a controversial anthropologist and a writer on the subject of sorcery. At the time I was still quite young. In my quest for answers, I had looked into various spiritual traditions and I wanted to find a teacher. But, from the very beginning, Carlos was very clear in this respect:

"I don't promise anything," he said; "I am not a guru. Freedom is an individual choice, and each one of us must assume the responsibility of fighting for it."

In one of the first talks that I attended, he severely criticized the kind of human idolatry that induces us to follow others, and to expect ready-made answers from them. He said that this attitude is a remnant of our herd mentality.

"Whoever sincerely wants to penetrate the teachings of sorcerers does not need guides. It is sufficient to have a genuine interest - and guts of steel. He will, by himself, find everything he needs through an unbending intent."

It was on these premises that our relationship evolved. Therefore, I want to state very clearly that I am not Carlos' apprentice, in any formal sense of the word. All I did was talk with him from time to time. Yet that was enough to convince me that the true path consists of our determination to be impeccable.

The main motivation for publishing some of the experiences I had by his side, is gratitude. Carlos was magnificent with everyone who had the good fortune of knowing him, since it is the nature of a nagual to bestow gifts of power. To be near him was to receive an abundance of inspiration and a wealth of stories, advice, and teachings of all kinds. It would be selfish then for one who has

In my dealings with him and with other men of knowledge, I witnessed events that from a rational point of view could only be called extraordinary. For sorcerers, however, things like remote vision, knowledge of events before they happen, or journeying to parallel worlds, are normal experiences in the execution of their tasks. As long as we are incapable of verifying them for ourselves, we will inevitably take them to be fantasies, or, at best, to be metaphors.

This is the nature of sorcerers' knowledge; take it or leave it. You cannot reason it out; it is not possible to "verify it" intellectually. The only thing we can do with it is to put it into practice, exploring the extraordinary possibilities within our being.

Armando Torres

PART I

A Romance with Knowledge

The Sorcerers' Revolution

We had gathered on the second floor of an elegant house in order to listen to a famous lecturer. We were a group of twelve people. I knew none of them, except the friend who had invited me. While we waited, we were chatting amicably among ourselves.

Nearly two hours passed and our guest had not yet arrived. People's faces began to show signs of fatigue. Some despaired and left. At a certain moment, I had the impulse to lean out of a window. I saw him arrive, and our eyes met.

Unexpectedly, a strong wind came into the room, making papers fly everywhere. As Carlos walked in, some of the people were still struggling to close the windows.

His appearance was different from what I had expected. He was short but solid, with grayish hair, and dark skin which had begun to furrow with wrinkles. He was dressed in an informal way which made him look ten years younger. His face, funny and full of life, radiated sympathy. He seemed very happy to be with us, and it was a true pleasure to be near him.

He greeted each of us with a handshake and said we had to use our time well, because he was expected somewhere else later that night. Then he made himself comfortable in an armchair and asked: "What do you want to talk about?"

But before we had time to answer him, he took the initiative and flooded us with stories. His conversation was direct and absorbing, sprinkled with jokes that he finished off with expressive gestures.

During this talk, he referred to nagualism as a body of practices and ideas, talked about its historical development,- and maintained that modern man has been granted an incredible opportunity

through the revelations of the sorcerers. Later, he spoke of a complex maneuver of awareness to which seers devote themselves: The movement of the assemblage point. This topic was quite new to me, so I limited myself to listen and take notes. Fortunately, Carlos had a habit of repeating the main ideas, and this made it easy for me to follow him.

Towards the end, he agreed to answer some questions. One of the people present wanted to know what the sorcerers' view on war was.

Carlos looked annoyed.

"What do you want me to say?" he asked. "That they are pacifists? Well, they are not! Our destiny as ordinary men doesn't concern them at all! You should understand this once and for all! A warrior is made for combat. When he is at war, he is comfortable."

Judging from his reaction, it seemed that the question had touched on a sensitive spot. He took his time, explaining that, unlike the petty wars which we as humans constantly involve ourselves in because of social, religious, or economic reasons, the war of sorcerers is not directed against other people, but against their own weaknesses. By the same token, their peace is not the submissive condition to which modern man has been reduced; rather, it is an imperturbable state of internal silence and discipline.

"Passivity", he said, "is a violation of our nature, because, in essence, we are all formidable combatants. Every human being is, by right, a soldier who has achieved his place in the world in a battle of life and death."

"Look at it this way: At least once, as sperms, each one of us fought a battle for life - a unique struggle against millions of other competitors - and we won! And now the battle continues, since we are trapped by the forces of this world. One part of us is fighting to disintegrate and die, while another tries to maintain life and awareness at any cost. There is no peace! A warrior realizes this, and uses it to his advantage. His goal continues to be that which

inspired the spark of life that created him: Access to a new level of awareness."

He continued by saying that as we become socialized, human beings are tamed, just like an animal is domesticated, by the power of stimuli and punishments.

"We have been trained to live and die meekly, following unnatural codes of behavior which soften us and make us lose that initial impulse, until our spirit is hardly noticeable. We are born as a result of a fight. By denying our basic tendencies, the society we live in eradicates the warring heritage that transforms us into magical beings."

He added that the only available way to change is to accept ourselves just as we are, and work from there.

"The warrior knows that he lives in a predatorial universe. He can never let his guard down. Wherever he looks, he sees an incessant fight, and he knows that it deserves his respect, because it is a fight to the death. Don Juan was always moving, coming or going, supporting this or rejecting that, provoking tensions or discharging them in a burst, shouting his intent or remaining silent; doing something. He was alive, and his life reflected the ebb and flow of the universe.

"He told me that, from the moment when the explosion which gave us origin occurred, until the moment of our death, we live within a flow. Those two episodes are unique, because they prepare us for the encounter of what lies further ahead. And what aligns us with that flow? An incessant battle, which only a warrior will attempt. Because of that, he lives in profound harmony with everything.

"For a warrior, to be harmonious is to flow, not to stop in the middle of the current and try to make a space of artificial and impossible peace. He knows that he can only give the very best of himself under conditions of maximum tension. For that reason, he seeks out his opponent the way a fighting rooster does - with

avidity, with delight, knowing that the next step is decisive. His opponent is not his fellow man, but his own attachments and weaknesses, and his grand challenge is to compress the

layers of his energy until they won't expand when his life ceases, so that his awareness does not die.

"Ask yourselves these questions: What am I doing with my life? Does it have a purpose? Is it tight enough? A warrior accepts his destiny, whatever it may be. However, he fights to change things, and he makes something exquisite of his passage on Earth. He tempers his will in such a way that nothing can deviate him from his purpose."

Another of the people present raised his hand, and asked how sorcerers are able to reconcile the principles of the warrior's way with their duties to society.

He answered:

"Sorcerers are free, they don't accept social obligations. The responsibility is to oneself, not to others. Do you know why you were given the power of perception? Have you discovered what purpose your life serves? Will you cancel your animal destiny? Those are sorcerers' questions, the only ones that can seriously change anything. If you are interested in others, then answer that!

"A warrior knows that what gives sense to his life is the challenge of death, and death is a personal matter. It is a challenge for each one of us, and one which only sincere warriors accept. Seen from this point of view, the worries of ordinary people are just expressions of their egomania."

Carlos insisted that we must not lose track of the fact that the commitment of a warrior is to what he called 'pure understanding'

- a state of being that arises from internal silence - and not to the transient attachments of the modality of the era in which he happens to live. He maintained that our social concerns are a description which has been implanted in us. It does not stem from a natural development of our consciousness. Rather, it is a product

of the collective mind, of emotional disarray, feelings of fear and guilt, of a desire to lead others or be led.

"Modern man does not fight his own battles. Instead, he enters into extraneous wars that have nothing to do with the spirit. Naturally, a sorcerer is not moved by this!

"My teacher used to say that he didn't honor agreements made in his absence: 'I was not present when they decreed that I had to be an imbecile!' He was born into particularly difficult circumstances, but he had the courage to become something more than just a human reaction to those circumstances. He affirmed that humanity's situation in general is horrendous, and to put emphasis on any particular group is just a covert form of racism.

"He used to repeat that in this world, there are only two kinds of people: Those who have energy, and those who don't. He lived in a permanent fight against the blindness of his fellow men, yet he remained impeccable; he did not interfere with anybody. When I tried to explain my concern for people to him, he would point at my incipient double chin and tell me: "Don't deceive yourself, Carlitos! If the human condition seriously interested you, you would not treat yourself like a pig."

"He taught me that to feel pity for others is inappropriate for a warrior, because pity for others always stems from concern for the self. He used to ask me, pointing at people we met on our way: Perhaps you believe yourself better than them?" He helped me to understand that the solidarity of sorcerers towards the people around them comes from a supreme command, not from human sentiment.

"Mercilessly stalking my emotional reactions, he led me by the hand to the source of my preoccupations, and I was able to realize that my concern for people was a fraud. I was trying to escape from myself, by transferring my problems to others. He showed me how compassion, in the sense we use the word, is a mental illness - a psychosis that will just make us more and more powerfully entangled in our ego."

It was obvious that remembering Don Juan had moved Carlos. I could see how a wave of affection overwhelmed him. One of the people present raised his hand and commented that, in contrast to what Carlos was saying, compassion towards one's neighbor is the essential idea of all religions.

He made a gesture of waving away a fly.

"Forget all that! Notions based on pity are a fraud! By the power of telling ourselves the same ideas over and over, we have substituted a genuine interest in man's spirit with cheap sentimentality. We have become professionals at compassion. And so what? Has it changed anything?"

"When you feel the collective mind putting its pressure on you, trying to convince you to concentrate on the appearances of the world, repeat this crushing truth to yourself: 'I am going to die, I am not important; nobody is!' Knowing that is the only thing that counts."

As an example of misplaced effort, he described the situation of a donkey caught in the mire. The more it moves, the more difficult things become. Its only way out is to act with coldness, try to relieve itself of the load on its back, and concentrate on the immediacy of its problem.

"The same thing happens to us. We are beings who are going to die. We were programmed to live like beasts, carrying loads of customs and other people's beliefs until the very end; but we can change all that! The freedom which the warrior's way offers us is within the reach of your hand; take advantage of it!"

He told us how, while he was an apprentice, he had a problem: He was addicted to cigarettes. He had tried to quit several times, but without success.

"One day, Don Juan told me that we were going to collect plants in a desert area and that the trip would last several days. He told me: 'you had better bring a whole carton of cigarettes! But make

sure you wrap them very well, because the desert is full of animals that might steal them.

"I thanked him for his consideration and carefully did as he had suggested. But the following day, when I woke up in the middle of the chaparral, I discovered that the package had disappeared.

"I despaired; I knew that without cigarettes I would soon begin to feel bad. Don Juan blamed the loss on a coyote and helped me to look for it. After hours of anguish, he finally found the tracks of the animal, which we followed for the rest of the day, going further and further into the mountains. When night arrived, he admitted to me that we were completely lost.

"Without cigarettes and without knowing where I was, I felt miserable. To console me, he assured me that there had to be a town near by, it was just a matter of walking a little further and we would arrive someplace and be safe. But we spent the whole next day looking for a road, and then the next, and then another. We spent almost two weeks like this.

"A moment arrived when, almost dead from exhaustion, I let myself fall down in the sand and prepared to die. When he saw me in that state, he tried to cheer me up and make me keep going, asking: 'Aren't you interested in smoking anymore?'

"I looked at him with rage, berated him for his incredible irresponsibility, and turning a deaf ear to him, I said that all I wanted was to die. 'Very well!' he replied with indifference; 'then we can go back now. We had been a few meters from the highway, the whole time!'

The anecdote made the room explode with laughter. When we finally calmed down, Carlos remarked:

"The tragedy of today's man is not his social condition, but the lack of will to change himself. It is very easy to design collective revolutions, but to genuinely change, to put an end to self-pity, to erase the ego, to abandon our habits and whims... ah, that's

something else entirely! Sorcerers say that true rebellion, and humanity's only way out as a species, is to stage a revolution against their own stupidity. As you can understand, this is solitary work.

"The goal of sorcerers is this sorcerers' revolution: The unrestricted unfolding of all our perceptual possibilities. I have never known a greater revolutionary than my teacher. He didn't just suggest changing tortillas for bread; oh no, he went straight to the core of the matter. He proposed a deadly somersault of thought to the unknown, the release from all ties. And he demonstrated that it is possible!

"He suggested that I fill my life with decisions of power, with strategies which, will bring me to awareness. He taught me that the order of the world doesn't have to be as we've been told; that I can toss it aside anytime. I am not obliged to uphold an image before others, or live in an inventory that doesn't suit me. My battle field is the path of the warrior!"

When the meeting was over, all his listeners gathered to exchange a few words with him and say their farewells. When it was my turn, Carlos looked me up and down. Then he asked me to tell him my name, and why I was there.

I told him my name and explained that a friend, knowing my interest for the subject, had told me about this opportunity.

His only comment was:

"I want to talk to you in private."

I was a little confused by his words, but waited until the end of his round of greetings and followed him to a corner of the room. There he invited me to have breakfast at his hotel the following day.

I assured him that it would be my pleasure.

He gave me the address, and told me:

"We'll meet tomorrow at nine o'clock."

He added that I should not tell anybody about our encounter, and that I should be punctual.

Self-importance

I arrived in the hotel lobby at the agreed time, and had barely waited one minute when I saw him coming down from the rooms upstairs. We greeted each other and went into the restaurant, where a delicious breakfast was served. At one point, I wanted to ask him something, but he made a gesture that I should shut my mouth. We ate in silence.

When we were done, we left to walk down to Donceles street, towards the Zocalo.

While we browsed through the second hand bookstores, he told me that he generally did not speak privately with people, but that my case was different because he had received an indication about it. I didn't know what he was talking about, and preferred to stay quiet, since any comment I might make would only show my ignorance.

He added that I shouldn't confuse his deference with a personal concern.

"I have said many times that my energetic condition prevents me from taking pupils. People are disappointed with me because of that, but there is no way!"

We talked about all kinds of things. He asked me many questions about my life, asked for my phone number, and told me that he was giving a talk at a friend's house the following night. I was invited to attend, but our relationship should remain secret. I replied that I would love to be there and he gave me the address and the schedule.

In one of the bookstores we visited, we came across a copy of one of his books, called "A Separate Reality". It was on the fiction shelf, which annoyed him a lot. He commented that people are so wrapped up in their everyday existence that they cannot even conceive of the mystery that surrounds us. When we encounter something unknown, we automatically classify it in a comfortable category and then we forget it.

I noticed that he thumbed through the books with great interest and that he would sometimes fondly and respectfully brush his hand over them. He said that they were more than just books, they were storage rooms of knowledge, and that one should surrender to knowledge, no matter in what form it was presented. He added that the information we need in order to increase our awareness hides in places we rarely think of, and if we were not so rigid, everything in our surroundings would tell us incredible secrets.

"All we need to do is open ourselves to knowledge, and it will come rushing to us like an avalanche."

While studying a table of books that were so cheap they were almost free, he was struck by how cheap used books were, compared to new ones. In his opinion, it proved that people are not really looking for information. What they look for is achieving the status of a buyer.

I asked him what kind of reading he preferred and he answered that he would like to know everything. However, today he was looking for a certain book of poetry, a particular, old edition which had never been printed again. He asked me to help him find it.

For a long time, we leafed through heaps of books. At the end, he went out with a package of them, but not the one he was looking for. With a guilty smile, he admitted:

"This always happens to me!"

Near noon, we sat down to rest on a bench in a square where various printers were offering their services. I took the opportunity

to confess that his statements of the previous night had left me perplexed, and asked him to explain in more detail what 'the war of the sorcerers' was about.

He explained, in a very kind way, that it was natural that the topic should affect me, since like all human beings I had been taught from birth to perceive the world in much the same way as a flock of sheep. He told me stories of his cohorts, and how after many years of tenaciously fighting their weaknesses they had finally overcome this collective coercion. He advised me to be patient, and in due course things would become clear to me.

After a while of relaxed conversation, he shook my hand in what was clearly a gesture of farewell. I could not contain my curiosity and asked him what he had meant when he said he had had 'an indication' about my person.

Instead of responding, he looked attentively at a point above my left shoulder. Immediately my ear became hot and began to hum. After a while, he told me that he didn't know the answer himself, because he had not been able to read the nature of the sign. But it had been something so clear that he was obliged to pay attention.

He added: "I cannot guide you, but I can put you in front of an abyss which will test all your abilities. It depends on you, whether you hurl yourself off it to fly, or run to hide in the security of your routines."

His words made me even more curious. I asked him which abyss he was talking about.

He told me it was my own dream.

The answer shocked me. Somehow, Carlos had noticed my internal dilemma.

It was a quarter to seven when I arrived at a nice house near Coyoacan. A pleasant girl who seemed to be the owner of the house received me. I explained that I had been invited to the talk that Carlos was going to give, and she let me enter. We introduced ourselves; she told me her name was Martha.

There were eight people in the room. Then another two guests arrived, and after them Carlos appeared. As usual, he greeted us effusively. This time, he was dressed in a very formal

manner, with a tie and a vest, and he was carrying a briefcase which gave him an intellectual look. He began to talk about many topics and, almost unnoticeably, he introduced the main subject of this talk: How to erase self-importance.

As a preamble, he stated that the significant role we grant ourselves in everything we do, say, or think, constitutes a kind of

'cognitive dissonance' which clouds our senses and prevents us from seeing things clearly and objectively.

"We are like atrophied birds. We were born with everything necessary to fly; however, we are permanently forced to fly in tight circles around our own self. The chain that ties us down is self-importance.

"The path which transforms an ordinary human being into a warrior is very arduous. Our sensation of being at the center of everything, and the need to always have the last word, is forever getting in the way. We feel important. And when one is important, any intent to change is a slow, complicated and painful process.

"That feeling isolates us. If not for that feeling, we would all flow in the sea of awareness and we would know that the self doesn't exist for its own sake, its destiny is to feed the Eagle.

"The sense of importance grows in a child while he is perfecting his social comprehension. We have been trained to construct a world of agreements that we can refer to, in order to communicate with each other. But this gift included an annoying attachment:

Our idea of 'me'. The self is a mental construction, it came from outside, and its time for us to get rid of it."

Carlos said that all the mistakes that occur when we communicate are living proof that the agreement we have received is completely artificial.

"After experimenting for millennia with situations that alter our ways of perceiving the world, the sorcerers from ancient Mexico discovered a portentous fact: We are not forced to live in a single reality, because the universe is constructed according to very fluid principles which can accommodate almost infinite forms, producing countless ranges of perception.

"Starting from this verification, they deduced that what human beings actually receive from outside is the ability to fix our attention in one of those ranges, in order to explore and recognize it. We mold ourselves to it and learn how to perceive it as something unique. This is how the idea that " we live in an exclusive world arose, and the feeling of being an individual self was generated in consequence.

"There is no doubt that the description we have received is a valuable possession, similar to the rigid stake that is tied to a tender sapling to strengthen and guide it. It allows us to grow up as normal people, within a society that is molded to that rigidity. To achieve it, we had to learn how to 'skim' - that is, how to make selective readings from the enormous volume of data that arrives to our senses. But once those readings are converted into 'reality', the rigidity of our attention works as an anchor, because it prevents us from becoming aware of our incredible possibilities.

"Don Juan claimed that what limits human perception is timidity. To be able to manage the world which surrounds us, we have had to give up our perceptual gift; that is, the possibility of witnessing everything. We sacrifice the flight of awareness in exchange for the security of the known. We can live strong, audacious, healthy lives; we can be impeccable warriors; but we don't dare!

"Our heritage is a stable house where we can live, but we have transformed it into a fort for the defense of the self; or rather, into a jail, where we condemn our energy to weaken in lifelong imprisonment. Our best years, feelings, and forces are wasted in forever repairing and bolstering that house, because we have wound up identifying ourselves with it.

"In the process of becoming a social being, a growing child acquires a false conviction of his own importance, and what was a healthy feeling of self-preservation in the beginning, ends up transformed into a selfish clamor for attention.

"Of all the gifts we have received, self-importance is the cruelest. It converts a magical, vivid creature into a poor, arrogant, graceless devil."

Pointing at his feet, he said that feeling important forces us to do absurd things.

"Look at me! Once I bought a pair of very fine shoes, which weighed almost a kilo each. I wasted five hundred dollars for the privilege of dragging these big shoes around!

"Because of our self-importance, we are stuffed to the point of bitterness, envy, and frustration. We allow ourselves to be guided by feelings of complacency, and we escape from the task of knowing ourselves with pretexts like 'I can't be bothered' or 'how tiring!'. Behind all that, there is an anxiety which we try to silence with an internal dialogue increasingly more dense and less natural."

At this point of his talk, Carlos took a pause in order to respond to some questions. He took the opportunity to tell us several stories illustrating the way self-importance deforms human beings, transforming them into rigid shells. Confronted with them, a warrior doesn't know whether to laugh or to cry.

"After many years of studying with Don Juan, I became so frightened of his practices that I went away for a while. I could not

accept what he and my benefactor were doing to me. It seemed inhuman, unnecessary. I yearned for sweeter treatment! I took the opportunity to visit various spiritual teachers from all over the world, hoping to find some knowledge in their doctrines that would justify my desertion.

"Once, I met a Californian guru who considered himself the real McCoy. He accepted me as his pupil, and gave me the task of begging for charitable alms in a public square. Thinking that this was a new experience for me, and probably would teach me an important lesson, I mustered my courage and did what he requested. When I returned to him, I said: 'Now you do it!'. He became angry with me and expelled me from the class.

"On another trip, I went to see a well-known Hindu teacher. I went to his house early in the morning, and stood in line with others. However, this gentleman kept us waiting for hours. When he appeared at the top of a stairway, he had a condescending air, as if granting us a

great favor by admitting us. He began to descend the steps in a very dignified manner, but his feet got entangled in his ample tunic, and he fell to the floor and cracked his head. He died there, right in front of us."

On another occasion, Carlos told us that the demon of self-importance does not only affect those who believe themselves to be masters. It is a general problem. One of the strongest ramparts of self-importance is the concern with one's personal appearance.

"That was always a sore spot for me. Don Juan used to stoke the fire of my resentment by making fun of my stature. He used to tell me: 'the shorter you are, the more egomaniac! You are small, and ugly as a bedbug; your only option is to be famous, because otherwise you don't exist!' He claimed that the mere sight of me made him want to vomit - for which he was infinitely grateful to me.

"I was offended by his comments, since I was convinced that he exaggerated my defects. But one day I came into a store in Los Angeles, and I realized that he was right. I heard someone beside me saying: 'Short!' and I felt so irritated that, without stopping to think, I turned • around and punched him furiously in the face. Afterwards, I realized that the man had not made the comment about me at all. He had just been short of money.

"One piece of advice Don Juan gave us was that, during our training as warriors, we should abstain from using what he called

'tools for the perpetuation of the self. This category included such objects as mirrors, the exhibition of academic titles, and albums of pictures with our personal history. The sorcerers of his group took this advice literally, but we, the apprentices, didn't care. However, for some reason, I interpreted his command in an extreme way, and from then on I did not even allow anyone to take pictures of me.

"Once, during a lecture, I explained that pictures are a perpetuation of self-concern, and that the purpose behind my reluctance was to maintain a measure of doubt about my person. Later, I found out that a certain lady among the public, who believed herself to be a spiritual guide, had commented that if she had had the face of a Mexican waiter, she wouldn't allow herself to be photographed either.

"While observing the quirks of self-importance, and the homogeneous way it contaminates absolutely everybody, the seers have divided human beings into three categories, which Don Juan gave the most ridiculous names he could think of: the urines, the farts, and the vomits. We all fit into one of them.

"The urines are characterized by their servility; they are toady, sticky, and cloying. They are the people who always want to do you a favor; they take care of you, they hold you back, they pamper you; they have so much compassion! In that way they hide the underlying reality: They are incapable of taking an initiative, and can never do anything by themselves. They need another person's command to feel that they are doing something. And,

unfortunately for them, they assume that others are as kind as they are; and because of that they are always hurt, disappointed, and tearful.

"The farts, on the other hand, are the opposite. Irritating, mean and self-sufficient, they constantly impose themselves and interfere. Once they get hold of you, they won't leave you

alone. They are the most unpleasant people you'll ever meet. If you are calm, the fart will arrive and wind you up and pull you in, and use you as much as possible. They have a natural gift as teachers and humanity's leaders. They are the kind who will kill to stay in power.

"The vomits are in-between these two categories. As neutrals, they are neither imposing nor will they be led. They are show-offs, ostentatious, and exhibitionistic. They give you the impression that they are something great, but in actual fact they are nothing. It's all boast. They are caricatures of people who believe too much in themselves, but, if you don't pay any attention to them, they are undone by their insignificance."

Somebody in the audience asked him if belonging to one of those categories is an obligatory characteristic, that is to say, an innate condition of our luminosity.

He answered:

"Nobody is born like this, we make ourselves this way! We get into one or the other of those categories because of some tiny incident that marked us in childhood, whether it is pressure from our parents or other imponderable factors. It starts there, and as we grow up, we become so involved in the defense of the self that at some point we can no longer remember the day we stopped being authentic, and became actors instead. When an apprentice enters the world of sorcerers, his basic personality is already formed, and nothing can cancel it out. The only option left to him is to laugh at it all.

"But, although it is not our congenital condition, sorcerers can detect what type of importance we grant ourselves through their seeing, because the molding of our nature over the years produces permanent deformities in the energetic field that surrounds us."

Carlos went on to explain that self-importance feeds on the same kind of energy that lets us dream. Therefore, to lose it is the basic condition of nagualism, because it liberates an energy surplus for our use; and also because, without that precaution, the warrior's path could turn us into aberrations.

"That is what has happened to many apprentices. They began well, saving their energy and developing their potential. But they didn't realize that, as they gained power, they were also nurturing a parasite within themselves. If we are going to give in to the pressures of the ego, it is preferable that we do it as ordinary men, because a sorcerer who considers himself important is the saddest thing there is.

"Keep in mind that self-importance is treacherous; it can be disguised behind a facade of almost impeccable humility, because it is not in a hurry. After an entire life of practicing, it only takes a minimum of negligence, a tiny mistake - and there it is again, like a virus that was incubated in silence, or like those frogs that wait for years under the sand of the desert, and with the first raindrops wake up from their lethargy and reproduce.

"Considering its nature, it is a benefactor's duty to attack the apprentices' self-importance until it explodes. He cannot feel pity. A warrior must learn to be humble in preparation for the arduous path ahead, or he won't have the smallest chance facing the darts of the unknown.

"Don Juan whipped his pupils to the point of cruelty. He recommended a twenty-four hour vigil to control the octopus of the self. Of course, we paid no attention to him! Except for

Eligio, the most advanced of the apprentices, the rest of us surrendered in the most shameful way to our propensities. In the case of la Gorda, it was fatal."

He told us the story of Maria Elena, an advanced pupil of Don Juan, who had developed great power as a warrior but didn't know how to control the bad habits of her human stage.

"She thought that she had it all under control, but that was not the case. A very selfish concern, a personal attachment, remained in her; she expected things from the group of warriors, and that finished her.

"La Gorda felt offended with me, because she considered me unable to lead the apprentices to freedom, and she never accepted me as the new nagual. Once Don Juan's directive force disappeared, she began to reproach me for my inadequacy, or rather my energetic anomaly, without keeping in mind that that, too, was a command of the spirit. Soon after, she allied herself with the Genaros and the Sisters and began to behave as if she were the leader of the party. But what exasperated her most of all was the public success of my books.

"One day, in an outburst of self-sufficiency, she gathered us all together, stood in front of us and screamed: Bunch of Suckers! I'm leaving!"

"She knew the exercise of the fire from within, by means of which she could move the assemblage point to the world of the nagual and meet up with Don Juan and Don Genaro. But that afternoon she was very agitated. Some of the apprentices tried to calm her, and that infuriated her even more. I could not do anything; the situation inhibited my power.

After a brutal effort, anything but impeccable, she had a stroke and fell down dead. What killed her was her egomania."

As a moral of this strange story, Carlos added that a warrior never allows himself to reach the point of madness, because to die from an ego attack is the stupidest way to die.

"Self-importance is deadly, it stops the free flow of the energy and that is fatal. It is responsible for our end as individuals, and one

day it will finish us as a species. When a warrior learns how to toss it aside, his spirit unfolds, jubilant, like a wild animal liberated from its cage and set free.

"Self-importance can be fought in various ways, but first of all it is necessary to know that it's there. If you have a defect and you recognize it, half the work is done already!

"So, above all, realize it. Take a board and write on it: 'Self-importance kills', and hang it in the most visible spot in the house. Read that sentence every day, try to remember it while you work, meditate about it. Maybe the moment in which it's meaning penetrates your interior will arrive, and you decide to do something. To realize it is, by and of itself, a great help, because the fight against the self generates its own impetus.

"Ordinarily, self-importance feeds on our feelings, ranging from the desire to get along with people and be accepted by others, to arrogance and sarcasm. But its favorite area of action is pity, for oneself and for those who surround us. In order to stalk it, above all we have to deconstruct our emotions into their smallest particles, and detect the sources that nurture them.

"Feelings rarely present themselves in a pure form. They disguise themselves. To hunt them down like rabbits, we have to proceed very delicately and strategically, because they are quick and we cannot reason with them.

"We begin with the most obvious things, like: How seriously do I take myself? How attached am I? To what do I dedicate my time? These are things that we can begin to change, accumulating enough energy to liberate a little bit of attention that in turn will allow us to go deeper into the exercise.

"For example, instead of spending hours watching television, going shopping or talking to our friends about stupid stuff, we could dedicate a small part of that time to do physical exercises, to recapitulate our history, or go alone to a park, take our shoes off and walk barefoot on the grass. It seems simple, but with those

practices our sensorial panorama changes. We recover something that was always there, which we had given up for lost.

"Starting from those small changes, we can analyze elements more difficult to detect, where our vanity is projected into insanity. For example, what are my convictions? Do I consider myself immortal? Am I special? Do I deserve to be noticed? This kind of analysis enters into the field of beliefs - the very core of our feelings - so you should undertake it through internal silence, and make a very fervent commitment to honesty. Otherwise, the mind will have its own way, and use all kind of justifications."

Carlos added that these exercises should be made with a sense of alarm, because it truly is about surviving a powerful attack.

"Realize that self-importance is an implacable poison. We have no time left; urgency is what we need. It is now or never!

"Once you have dissected your feelings, you should learn how to channel your efforts beyond human concerns, to the place of no pity. For seers, that place is an area in our luminosity, every bit as functional as the area of rationality. We can learn how to evaluate the world from a detached point of view, just as we learned, as children, to judge it from the point of view of reason. The only difference is that detachment as a focal point is much closer to the warrior's temper.

"Without that precaution, the emotional turbulence stirred up by the exercise of stalking our self-importance can be so painful that we may turn to suicide or insanity. When the apprentice learns how to contemplate the world from the position of no pity, perceiving that behind all situations which imply an energetic drain there is an impersonal universe, he stops being just a knot of feelings and becomes a fluid being.

"The problem with compassion is that it forces us to see the world through self-indulgence. A warrior without compassion is a person who has located his will at the center of indifference, and he doesn't soothe himself by saying 'poor me'. He is an individual

who feels no pity for his weaknesses, and he has learned to laugh at himself.

"A way to define self-importance, is to understand it as the projection of our weaknesses through social interaction. It is like the screams and threatening postures some small animals

adopt, to hide the fact that they don't really have any defenses. We are important because we are afraid, and the more fear, the more ego.

"However, and fortunately for warriors, self-importance has a weak point: It depends on recognition to maintain itself. It's like a kite that needs a current of air to ascend and to stay high; otherwise, it will fall down and break. If we don't grant any importance to the importance, it's finished.

"Knowing this, an apprentice renovates his relationships. He learns how to escape those who confirm his self, and frequents those who don't care about anything human. He looks for criticism, not flattery. Every so often, he starts a new life, erases his history, changes his name, explores new personalities, and annuls the suffocating persistence of his ego. He puts himself in situations where his authentic self is forced to take control. A power hunter doesn't have pity; he doesn't look for recognition in anybody else's eyes.

"The state of no pity is surprising. One attempts to reach it step by step, through years of continuous pressure, but it happens suddenly, like an instantaneous vibration that breaks our mold and allows us to look at the world with a serene smile. For the first time in many years, we feel free of the terrible weight of being ourselves, and we see the reality that surrounds us. Once there, we are not alone. An incredible push awaits us, help which comes from the core of the Eagle and transports us in a microsecond to universes of sobriety and sanity.

"When we don't have any pity for ourselves, we can face the impact of our personal extinction with elegance. Death is the force that gives the warrior value and moderation. Only by looking through the eyes of death can we notice that we are not important.

Then death comes to live by our side, and begins to tell us its secrets.

"The contact with death's unchangeable nature leaves an indelible mark on the character of the apprentice. He understands, once and for all, that all the energy of the universe is connected. There is no world of objects, related to each other through physical laws. What exists is a panorama of luminous emanations, inextricably bundled together, within which we can make interpretations as far as the power of our attention will allow. All our actions count, because they release avalanches in the infinite. For that reason, none is worth more than any other, none is more important than any other.

"That vision destroys the tendency we have to be indulgent with ourselves. Witnessing this universal bond, the warrior is prey to contradictory feelings. On the one hand, indescribable joy and a supreme and impersonal reverence toward all that exists. On the other, a sense of the inevitable, and a deep sadness that has nothing to do with self-pity; a sadness that comes from the breast of infinity, a blast of solitude which will never leave him again.

"That purified feeling gives the warrior the sobriety, the subtlety, and the silence that he needs to venture there, where all human reasoning fail. Under such conditions, self-importance can't sustain itself."

The Path Of The Warrior

One morning I received a phone call, and to my surprise it was Carlos. He told me that he would arrive at the airport in Mexico City in four hours, and asked if I could pick him up. I told him it would be a pleasure. He gave me the number of his flight, and I figured that he was calling from the airport in Los Angeles, since that would fit the time required for the trip.

When he arrived, I accompanied him on some errands related to the printing of his book. Afterwards, we went to a cafe for a chat. Before saying goodbye, we agreed to meet at the place where he was giving a lecture that night.

The weather was terrible; perhaps that was why, when I arrived at the house where the appointment was, I found that just a few

people had arrived. I placed my coat, sopping wet, over the back of a seat, and sat down in a corner near Carlos.

The core of his statements that evening was that the universe in its great entirety is feminine, and of a predatory nature, and there is a tenacious battle of consciousness going on, where, as always, the strongest absorbs the weakest.

"On the cosmic scale, the strength of a being is not measured by its physical capability, but by its capacity to manipulate awareness. It follows that if we are to take the next evolutionary step, it must be done by means of discipline, determination, and strategy. Those are our weapons.

"Through their seeing, sorcerers witness that struggle, and they take their place in it, ready for the worst and without complaining about the result. For their ever-ready disposition for combat, they have won the title of 'warriors'.

"A warrior considers the world we live in to be a great mystery, and he knows that the mystery is there to be revealed to those who deliberately look for it. That attitude of audacity will occasionally move the tentacles of the unknown, making the spirit manifest itself."

He explained to us that the warrior's audacity is born out of the contact with his imminent death.

He told us the story of a girl who one day arrived at his editor's office, put a small mat down on the floor, sat down on it, and told the editor: 'I won't leave until I speak to Carlos Castaneda!' All attempts to discourage her were useless; the girl remained inflexible. Finally, the editor called Carlos and told him that a crazy girl demanded his presence.

"What could I do? I went there and met her. When I asked her the reason for her strange behavior, she told me that, being deadly sick, she had gone to the desert to die. But, while she meditated in solitude, she understood that she had still not tried everything, and she decided to play her last card. For her, that meant to know the nagual in person.

"Impressed by her story, I made her a unique proposition: 'Leave everything and come to the world of the sorcerers'. She answered at once: 'I'm game!' When I heard her answer, my hair

stood on end, because Don Juan used to say the same thing to me: 'If we're going to play, then let's play! But we play to the death'.

"That is the sorcerer's feeling in front of his destiny: 'I bet my life on this intent, nothing less. I know that my end could be waiting for me anywhere, and there isn't anything I can do to avoid it. I will walk down my path with utmost concentration, I accept the responsibility of living fully, I will risk everything on a single hand'.

"A warrior knows that no victory is guaranteed when faced with death. Even so, he freely enters into his battle, not because he believes he will win, but for the excitement of his war. For him,

entering the war is already a victory. And while he fights, he is happy - because, for one who is already dead, every second of life is a gift."

He continued by saying that what makes it possible for the world to exist just as we see it, is our attention and that of all our fellow men, focused simultaneously and connected in a tight net of interpretations, reinforced by agreement.

One of the present asked him to further clarify this topic.

He explained:

"See, the domain of attention is of supreme importance in the path of sorcerers, because it is the primary matter of creation. In all worlds, degrees of evolution are measured by the ability to realize, to be aware.

"In order to manipulate and understand the emanations which arrive to our senses, sorcerers develop the power of their attention, sharpening it through discipline to exquisite levels, which allow them to transcend human limitations and to fulfill all the possibilities of perception. Their concentration is so intense that they can penetrate the thick armor of appearances, and expose the essence of things. Seers call that degree of increased awareness 'seeing.

"Even though such a fixed attention may seem like stubbornness, obsession, or fanaticism, for the practitioner it's nothing but discipline."

He warned us not to confuse the discipline of sorcerers with people's repetitive routines.

"Discipline, as understood by a warrior, is creative, open, and produces freedom. It is the ability to face the unknown, transforming the feeling of knowing into reverent astonishment; of considering things that exceed the scope of our habits, and daring to face the only war that is worthwhile: The battle for awareness.

It is the courage to accept the consequences of our actions, whatever they may be, without self-pity or feelings of blame.

"Having discipline is the key to handling attention, because it takes us to the will. And this allows us to modify the world until it becomes what we want it to be, and not like the one which was imposed on us from the outside. For this reason, will is the threshold of intent for

warriors. Its power is so great that when it is focused on something, it can produce the most astonishing effects."

As examples, he told us many stories about extraordinary events he had witnessed. He maintained that underlying each one of the prodigious actions of sorcerers, there is a whole life of discipline, sobriety, detachment, and analytical capability. Warriors place the highest value on these attributes, and together they constitute the state of being which they call impeccability.

He went on to explain that impeccability doesn't have anything to do with an intellectual position, a belief, or anything like that. It is a consequence of saving energy.

"A warrior accepts with humility what he is, and he doesn't squander his power on lamenting because things are not otherwise. If a door is closed, we don't kick it and punch it! Instead, we attentively study the lock and figure out how to open it. In the same way, if his life is not satisfactory, the warrior is not offended, nor does he complain. On the contrary, he designs strategies to alter the course of his destiny.

"If we learn how to curb our self-pity, and at the same time make room for the authentic 'me, we will become drivers of cosmic intent, and conduits for torrents of energy.

"In order to flow in such a way, we must learn to trust our resources and to understand that we were born with everything we need for the extravagant adventure which is our life. As a warrior, each man or woman who has entered the path of sorcery knows that he or she is responsible for him/herself. He or she doesn't look

aside, seeking approval, or trying to discharge their frustrations on others.

"Don Juan told me: "What you are looking for is within yourself. You have to struggle to make your actions final, and to achieve your own clarity. Commit yourself, before it's too late!"

"The aspect of impeccability which particularly concerns our daily lives is knowing how exercising our freedom affects others, and avoiding the resulting friction at any cost. Occasionally, our relationships with others will generate friction and expectations. A fighting sorcerer pays close attention to his contacts, and becomes a hunter of signs. If there are no signs, he doesn't interact with people; he is content to wait because, although he doesn't have time, he has all the patience in the world. He knows that too much is at stake, and won't risk ruining everything by one false move.

"Since he is never desperate to achieve contact with anyone, the warrior can choose his affections with sobriety and detachment, taking care at all times that the people he consents to be with are compatible with his energy. The secret to achieving such clarity of vision consists in identifying oneself and not identifying oneself. A sorcerer identifies himself with the abstract, and not with the world. And that allows him to be independent and take care of himself."

Then he told us a story about a guy who considered himself to be a great warrior, but every time he had problems at home and his wife didn't make him dinner or didn't wash or iron his clothes, he collapsed in chaos. After a long battle with that situation, the man decided to

introduce a radical change in his life; but, instead of reforming his character, like he was supposed to, he changed his wife for another one.

"Realize that, face to face with our destiny, each one of us is alone. So take control of your own life. A warrior polishes details, develops his imagination and puts his ingenuity to the test by resolving situations. It's inconceivable for him to feel destitute, because he has self-control and he doesn't need anything from

anybody. By concentrating on details, he learns how to cultivate delicacy, subtlety, and elegance.

"Don Vicente Medrano said that the beauty of this struggle is shown in the invisible stitches. That is the sorcerer's trademark, the fulfillment of intent.

"The gift of independence and the control of details produce the capacity to persist where other people would desist. When arriving at this point, the warrior is barely a step away from impeccable conduct.

"Impeccability is born of a delicate balance between our internal being and the forces of the external world. It is an achievement that requires effort, time, dedication, and being permanently attentive to the objective, so that the final purpose is never lost from sight. But, mainly, it requires persistence. Persistence defeats apathy, it is as simple as that.

"The threshold of magic is an intent sustained beyond what seems possible, desirable, or reasonable. It is a mental leap, to become tuned to the will of the Eagle's emanations, and to allow their command to loosen the rigidity of our limits. But few are willing to pay the price, to walk the extra mile."

He admitted that, on several occasions, he was about to abandon his teacher, oppressed by the magnitude of the task he was given. What saved him in the end, and gave him 'a second wind, was a wave of energy that the warrior finds within himself when everything seems lost.

"Many apprentices, after searching for years and not finding anything to satisfy their expectations, retire disappointed without knowing that maybe they were just a few steps from their goal."

He shook his head and commented sadly:

"We should not die on the beach after swimming so far..."

"Once he has gained flexibility, humility, a sense of independence, control of details, and persistence, a warrior in search of impeccability knows that he has gained the power of his decisions. He is authorized to do or not do, according to what suits him, and nobody can force him to do anything. It is at this point that he needs, more than ever, to be the owner of his emotions and of his mind, because clarity joined with power make an explosive mixture. It can easily make a man reckless.

"The path of the warrior consists of saving energy; everything that goes against that threatens his intent to be impeccable. But sometimes, because of the surplus of power which has accumulated in his luminosity, circumstances can take a particularly hard turn for him.

"His dilemma is the same which faces a hang-glider who, after struggling for hours to get up to the mountaintop carrying his heavy equipment, finds that weather conditions are no longer right for the flight. In a situation like that, it is easier for the athlete to decide to jump anyway, than decide to remain on the ground. If he hasn't learned to control his decisions appropriately, the most probable outcome is that he jumps to his death.

"In the same way, there will be times when the apprentice forgets that his objective is not to nourish his ego, and he enters into situations which are stronger than him. Not only can this be fatal, but it constitutes a serious breach of discipline that will plug him into the labyrinths of power. In these cases, power becomes his executioner.

"A warrior of knowledge does not senselessly surrender to the excitement of war. First he observes the conditions, gauges his possibilities, and establishes his support points. Then, depending on this evaluation, he will rush forth or retreat without the slightest hesitation. He does not deal his blows out blindly, but turns every step into an immaculate exercise of strategy.

"The apprentice who does not learn in time to decide how, when, and with whom he must enter into battle, is removed. Either

because someone kills him, or because he is defeated so many times that he cannot rise again.

"The warrior's final challenge is to balance all the attributes of his path. Once he does that, his purpose becomes inflexible. He is no longer moved by a desperate desire for gain. He is the owner of his will, and can put it to his personal service. When he arrives at that point, the warrior has learned how to be impeccable. And for him to continue being impeccable depends totally on the energy he has accumulated."

He gave as an example an apprentice who uses his recently won powers to become rich. He then comes to a forked road, either entering into the mindset of 'I want this', 'I want that', or to cultivate intent. If he chooses the first option, he has arrived at the end of his path, because no matter how much energy he dedicates to them, the yearnings of the ego are never really satisfied. In the second option, on the other hand, he has found his route to freedom.

"Intent is the tuning of our attention to cosmic awareness, which transforms our volition into commands of the Eagle. We must be daring to attempt it deliberately, but, once there, everything becomes possible. Intent allows sorcerers to live in a non-ordinary world, and to intend a destiny of freedom. For them, freedom is a fact, not just a Utopia.

"By ignoring the principles of the warrior's way, modern man has wound up in a diabolical trap, made up of family, religious and social concerns. He works eight hours a day in order to maintain his way of life. Then he returns home, where the wife of always awaits him, and his children, identical to any other of a billion children, will demand things from him and force him to continue in his chains, until his powers are drained and he becomes a useless object who sits meditating over his memories in a corner of the house. They told him that this is happiness, but he doesn't feel happy, he feels shackled.

Be Warriors, stop that! Realize your potential and free yourselves free yourselves from whatever! Don't impose limits on yourselves. If you can defy the force of gravity and fly, that's great! And if you still have the impetus to challenge death and buy a ticket to eternity, that is |; tremendous!

£:" "Take a risk! Get out of the trap of self-reflexion and dare to

\$": perceive all that is humanly possible! A warrior of knowledge

£;>| makes an effort to be authentic, and he won't accept any compromises, because the object of his fight is total freedom."

Awareness Of Death

Over the years, the need to understand the world had led me to store a lot of scientific or religious explanations on almost everything, which all had one common denominator: A great trust in the continuity of man. By helping me to see the universe with the eyes of a sorcerer, Carlos destroyed that sensation in me. He made me see that death is an irrevocable reality, and that to avoid acknowledging it by applying second-hand beliefs is shameful.

On one occasion, somebody asked him:

"Carlos, what expectations do you have for the future?"

He jumped:

"There are no expectations! Sorcerers don't have a tomorrow!"

That night, a large group of interested people had gathered in the auditorium of a private residence, near the area of San Jeronimo. When I arrived, Carlos was already there. He was smiling, busily answering questions.

His initial topic was what he called 'not-doing', an activity specially designed to banish any trace of every-day habits from our lives. He affirmed that not-doing is the favorite exercise of apprentices, because it introduces them to a marvelous environment and creates a very refreshing bewilderment for one's energy. The effect this has on one's awareness they call 'stopping the world.'

In response to some questions, he explained that not-doing cannot be reasoned out. Any effort applied towards understanding it, is in fact an interpretation of the teaching - and goes automatically into the field of 'doing'.

"The premise of sorcerers for dealing with this kind of practice is inner silence, and the quality of silence required for something so enormous as stopping the world can only come from direct contact with the great truth of our existence: That we are all going to die."

He advised us:

"If you want to know yourselves, be aware of your personal death. It's not negotiable, it is the only thing that you can seriously own. Everything else may fail, but not death, you can take that as a fact. Learn how to use it to produce real effects in your lives.

"Also, stop believing in fairy tales. Nobody needs you out there. None of us is so important that it justifies inventing something as fantastic as immortality. A humble sorcerer knows that

his destiny is the same as that of any other living being on Earth. So, instead of having false hopes, he works concretely and with great effort to escape the human condition, and to reach the only exit we have: The breaking of our perceptual barrier.

"While you listen to death's advice, make yourself responsible for your lives, for the totality of your actions. Explore yourself, recognize yourself, and live intensely, like sorcerers live. Intensity is the only tiling that can save us from boredom.

"Once aligned with death, you will be able to take the next step: Reducing your baggage to a minimum. This is a prison world, and we must leave it as fugitives; we can't take anything with us. Human beings are travelers by nature. To fly and to know other horizons is our destiny. Do you take your bed or your dining table with you on a trip? Synthesize your life!"

He made the comment that humanity in our time has acquired a strange habit that is symptomatic of the mental state we live in.

When we travel, we buy all kinds of useless devices in other countries, things that we certainly would never buy in our own country. Once we return home, we store them in a corner and end up forgetting their existence - until one day we notice them by chance, and toss them in the garbage.

"And we behave this way on the journey that is our life. We are like donkeys carrying a bale of useless snuff, there is nothing valuable there. Everything we did, at the end, when old age assaults us, only serves to endlessly repeat some sentence or other, like a scratched record.

"A sorcerer asks himself: What is the sense of all this? Why invest my resources in something which won't help me at all? The appointment of a sorcerer is with the unknown, he cannot commit his energy to nonsense. While you walk the Earth, collect something of true value from it, otherwise it wasn't worth it.

"The power that governs us has granted us a choice. Either we spend life prowling around our familiar habits, or we encourage ourselves to get to know other worlds. The only thing which can give us the necessary jolt is the awareness of death.

"An ordinary person spends his whole existence without ever stopping to reflect, because he thinks that death is at the end of life; after all, we will always have time for it! But a warrior has discovered that this is not true. Death lives beside us, an arm's length away, permanently alert, looking at us, ready to jump at the smallest provocation. The warrior transforms his animal fear of extinction into an opportunity for joy. because he knows that ail he has is this moment. Think as warriors. we are all going to die!"

One of the present asked him:

"Carlos, in another lecture you told us that having the spirit of a warrior means seeing death as a privilege. What does that mean?"

He answered:

"It means to leave our mental habits behind."

"We are so accustomed to coexistence that, even face to face with death, we continue thinking in group terms. Religions don't tell us about the individual in contact with the absolute, but of flocks of sheep and goats, who go to heaven or to hell according to their fortune. Even if we are atheists and don't believe that anything happens after death, that 'anything' is generic, we assume it is the same for everybody. We cannot conceive of the idea that the power of an impeccable life can change things.

"In the view of such ignorance, it is normal for an ordinary man to feel panic regarding his end, and try to deal with it with prayers and medicines, or confuse himself with the noise of the world.

"Human beings have an egocentric and extremely simplistic vision of the universe. We never stop to consider our destiny as transitory beings. However, our obsession with the future betrays us.

"The sincerity or cynicism of our convictions makes no difference, because deep down we all know what is going to happen. That's why we all leave signs behind. We build pyramids, skyscrapers, make children, write books, or, at the very least, we draw our initials in the bark of a tree. It is the ancestral fear, the silent knowledge of death, which is behind that subconscious impulse.

"But there is one group of human beings who have been able to face that fear. As opposed to ordinary people, sorcerers eagerly seek out any situation that will take them beyond social interpretations. What better opportunity than their own extinction! Thanks to their frequent excursions into the unknown, they know that death is not natural; it is magical. Natural things are subject to laws, but death is not. To die is always a personal event, and for that sole reason, it is an act of power.

"Death is the gateway to infinity. A door made to the exact measure of each of us, which we will all pass through someday, returning to our origin. Our lack of understanding impels us to see it as a common reducer. But no, there is nothing common about it;

A girl who took part in this conversation was clearly affected by his words, and commented that the obsessive presence of death in his teachings was a detail that contributed to darken them. She would have liked a more optimistic emphasis, more focused on life and its accomplishments.

Carlos smiled and replied:

"Oh sweetheart! Your words show a lack of deep experience with life. Sorcerers are not negative, they don't seek the end. But they know that what gives value to life is having an objective worth dying for.

"The future is unpredictable and inevitable. Some day you won't be here anymore, like this, you will be gone. Do you know that the tree for your coffin has probably been cut already?

"For the warrior and for an ordinary man, the urgency of living is the same, because neither knows when they will take the last step. For that reason we have to be attentive to death, it can jump at us from any corner. I knew a guy who went up on a bridge and urinated above a passing electric train. The urine touched the high voltage cables, which gave him an electrical shock and burned him to cinders on the spot.

"Death is not a game, it is reality Without death, there would not be any power in what sorcerers do. It involves you personally, whether you want it to or not. You can be so cynical that you

discard other topics of these teachings, but you cannot make fun of your end, because it is beyond your power to decide, and it is implacable.

"Destiny's coach will take all of us, without distinction. But there are two kinds of travelers: warriors who can leave with the totality of themselves, because they have fine-tuned every detail of their lives, and ordinary people, with boring existences, without creativity, whose only hope is in the repetition of their stereotypes until the end; people whose end won't make any difference, whether this end happens today or in thirty years. We are all there, waiting on the platform of eternity, but not everyone knows it. Awareness of death is a great art.

"When a warrior has put an end to his routines, when he doesn't care anymore whether he has company or is alone, because he has heard the silent whisper of the spirit; then you can say that, truly, he has died. From that point on, even the simplest things in life become extraordinary for him.

"For this, a sorcerer learns how to live again. He tastes each moment as if it were the last one. He doesn't waste any effort on feeling dissatisfied, nor does he throw away his energy. He doesn't wait until he becomes old to ponder the mysteries of the world. He is ahead, he explores, he knows and marvels.

"If you want to make space for the unknown, you must be aware of your personal extinction. Accept your destiny as the unavoidable fact that it is. Purify that feeling, become responsible for the incredible event of being alive. Don't beg in the presence of death; it will not condescend to those who give in. Invoke it, aware that you came to this world to know it. Challenge it, even knowing that whatever we do, we don't have the smallest chance of conquering it. She is as gentle with the warrior as it is merciless with the ordinary man."

After this lecture, Carlos gave us an exercise.

"It concerns an inventory of your loved ones, of everybody who concerns you. Once you have classified them according to the degree of feeling that you have for each, you will take them, one by one, and pass them through death."

A murmur of consternation rippled through the listeners.

Making a soothing gesture, Carlos added:

"Don't get scared! There is nothing macabre about death. What is macabre is that we cannot face it with deliberation,.

"You should do this exercise at midnight, when the fixation of our assemblage point is loosened and we are willing to believe in ghosts. It is very simple; you will evoke your dear beings through their inevitable end. Don't think about how or when they will die. Simply make yourself aware that some day they won't be there anymore. One by one they will leave, God knows in which order, and it doesn't matter what you try to do to avoid it.

"When evoking them in this way, you won't harm them; on the contrary! You will be seeing them in the appropriate perspective. The focal point of death is prodigious, it restores the true values of life."

Energetic Drainage

On many occasions when I listened to Carlos, he referred to the topic of energy. Each time, he would explain different aspects of it. I have gathered some of them in this chapter, to give the reader a more coherent view.

His teachings, or rather the teachings of the tradition of seers to which he belonged, begin with the fact that the universe is dual. It is formed by two forces which the old seers symbolized by means of two snakes that are intertwined. But those forces have nothing to do with the dualities we call good and bad, God and Devil, positive and negative, or any other kind of opposing pairs we can think of coherently. Rather, they constitute an inexplicable wave of energy which the Toltecs called the tonal and the nagual.

In an axiomatic way, they established that everything we can interpret or imagine in any way is the tonal, and the rest, which we cannot categorize, is the nagual.

To emphasize that they are not two antagonistic realities, but rather two complementary aspects of one unique force, which they nicknamed 'the Eagle', the seers compared the tonal and the nagual with the two sides of our physical body, the right side and the left side. And they saw that, just as the basic configuration of organisms is almost totally structured from a bilateral symmetry, these are also the forms in which energy manifests itself in the Cosmos, and with it, the way we perceive.

Life is formed when a portion of the free energy of infinity - which the old seers called 'the emanations of the Eagle' - is encapsulated by an external force, becoming a new individual being, aware of himself. And they saw that the perception of the

world happens when something they called 'the assemblage point of perception' comes into play.

Although that center of selection is in operation in every living being in the universe, the deliberate awareness of oneself, on this Earth, can only be achieved by human beings and a group of species lacking physical organization, whom the seers of antiquity called 'allies'. Interaction between man and these beings is not only feasible, it is something that frequently happens in our dreams.

Sorcerers cultivate it, since the consciousness of inorganic beings, which are much older than us, is filled with something that we all covet: Knowledge.

Having taken on the work of investigating the modes of energy, the sages from old Mexico were urged to describe to their contemporaries what they had discovered. In their effort to find the most appropriate terms, they said that all that exists is divided into light and dark, like day and night. And from there they derived every thinkable binary description. It is a command which reflects the great cosmic duality.

Through their seeing, they discovered that the world of energy is made up of extensive areas of darkness, sprinkled with tiny points of light, and they perceived that the dark areas

correspond to the feminine part of the energy, while bright areas correspond to the masculine. They arrived at the inevitable conclusion that the universe is almost in its entirety feminine, and that the bright energy, the masculine, is rare.

By definition, they associated darkness with the left side, the nagual, the unknown, and the feminine; and luminosity with the right side, the tonal, the known, and the masculine.

Continuing their observations, they saw that the act of galactic creation happens when the cosmic darkness contracts itself, and from it arises an explosion of light, a spark that expands, giving origin to the order of time and space. The law of this order is that

things always have an end, which again implies that the unique and perennial principle of the universe is the dark energy; feminine, creative, and eternal.

Likewise, man is divided into the tonal, represented by his daytime vigil, and the nagual, by his dreams at night.

From these observations, the rest of the wisdom of the naguals is derived. They teach that dreams are a doorway to power because, ultimately, what sustains us is the dark energy, to which we go periodically to be renewed. Consequently, they directed all their power towards perfecting the art of becoming conscious while in the state of dreaming. They called that special kind of attention

'dreaming', and they used it to deliberately explore the dark energy and come into contact with the source of the universe. In that way, the initial observation of the wise Toltecs became a practical knowledge.

One of Carlos' more frequent statements was that the opinions that we form about everything transform our world into something more and more predictable, until the possibility of visiting other worlds becomes a fairy tale.

"For modern man", he said on one occasion, "absolutely everything that exists is put into definite categories. We are labeling machines. We classify the world, and the world classifies us. If once you killed a dog, you are the dog-killer for the rest of your life, even if you never touched another one. And those classifications are inherited!"

He mentioned a series of funny and expressive last names that were related to the characteristics of a particular person, but then the names were bequeathed as an imposition on their descendants. It went to show that, energetically, people are marked.

He asserted that the greatest example of that absurd propensity to classify us is what believers call 'original sin', the sin of Adam and Eve, which-makes us all forever sinful and also, makes us all behave as sinners.

"We have become perceptual jailers of each other. The chain of human thought is powerful.

"Even our deepest feelings are classified and ordered so that nothing can escape. One example is the way we alienate ourselves from the actual time we are living in, in order to mindlessly go around repeating stereotypes. We have a collection of preset days: Mother's Day, All

Saints' Day, Valentine Day, birthday anniversaries and weddings... They are like stakes we tie our life to so we won't get lost, and thus we walk the Earth, revolving around our descriptions like beasts tied by the neck."

He told us about when he and Don Juan once traveled to a small town in the north of Mexico, and sat down to rest on a bench in the church square. Suddenly, ten or twelve youths came carrying a Judas figure made of cloth and canes. It was dressed in a blanket and sandals, like an Indian. They installed it in the town square, and that night there was a public burning. Everybody drank, and everybody took turns insulting the puppet as part of the ritual.

"With customs like that, people keep Judas alive. They remember him, they sustain him, they keep him in a true hell with their memories. And, after burning him, next year they resuscitate him, and kill him again. The rigidity of human behavior is revealed in those routines."

A person in the audience requested permission to speak and asked him whether his statement regarding how, by remembering him, the town keeps Judas alive, was meant literally or was just a metaphor.

He answered:

"Sorcerers affirm that as long as there is memory, there is awareness of being, since the current of thought is an injection of life. True death is oblivion.

"The idea that time moves in a straight line from past to future is completely primitive, something that goes against the experience of sorcerers and even of modern science. Due to that limited interpretation, most of humanity is kept prisoner in a tunnel of time, where their destiny becomes an infinite repetition of the same.

"The reality of our condition is that we are energetically blocked, due to what sorcerers call 'the collective fixation of the assemblage point.'

"A remarkable consequence of that fixation is the way we specialize. When preparing for a profession, for example, instead of widening our scope, we usually end up becoming sedentary, boring individuals, without creativity and without motivation. In a few years, our life becomes tedious, but, far from taking responsibility and changing ourselves, we blame our circumstances.

"One of the most serious habits that shape our inventory, is the habit of telling others everything we do, or stop doing. It is an important part of socialization. We want to generate an exclusive image of ourselves, but the image ends up molding itself to other people's expectations, and we become imitations of what we could be. Once they consider us as facts, we have to follow certain behavioral patterns, even when we are sick of them or even if we don't believe in them, because any intent to change puts us up against the wall.

"Most people feel empty when they don't have love or friends, because they have built their life on a superficial base of relationships and they don't have any time left to ponder their destiny. Unfortunately, friendship is generally based on an exchange of intimacies, while a basic premise of mundane relationships is that everything we say some day will be used

against us. It's a sad fact that the ones we care about the most, are also our worst headaches!

"Sorcerers maintain that talking about ourselves makes us accessible and weak, while learning how to be quiet fills us with power. A principle of the path of knowledge is to turn your own life into something so unpredictable that not even you yourself knows what's going to happen.

"The only way of leaving the collective inventory is moving away from those who know us well. After a time, mental walls that trap us become a little softer and they start to give in. That's when genuine opportunities for change appear and we can take control of our lives.

"If we were able to transcend interpretation and face pure perception without prejudice, the impression of a world of objects would vanish. In its place, we would witness energy as it flows in the universe. Under such conditions, the chain of other people's thoughts would no longer have the smallest effect on us and we would not feel obliged to be or do anything. Then our senses would have no limits. That's seeing."

He defined it further:

"The sorcerer's objective is to break the fixation of social interpretations, and to see energy directly. To see is a total perceptual experience."

"Seeing energy as it flows is an imperious need on the path of knowledge. Ultimately, all the effort of sorcerers is guided to that end. It is not enough for a warrior to know that the universe is energy; he has to verify it for himself."

"Seeing is a practical matter which has immediate consequences and far-reaching effects on our lives. The most dramatic of them is that sorcerers learn to see time, as an objective dimension." He continued by saying that energy is distributed through the universe in layers. All conscious beings belong to one of these

Everyday love ends up becoming a debt, when others claim from us the same attention they gave us. And a debt of feelings is something fatal!

"For these reasons, one of priorities of a teacher is to destroy the apprentice's sexual patterns. This is a crucial matter that requires lifelong work, but it is necessary to begin from the first moment, because becoming a member of a party of sorcerers cannot be used as a pretext for sexual deficiencies. If we don't solve that matter as ordinary men and women, our chances to advance on the warrior's path are very slim.

"Sorcerers have many ways of correcting an apprentice. Some don't have any scruples and subject the pupil to real tortures, attacking his weaknesses until he gets cured or he cracks. Others, like my teacher, are extremely delicate on this point and prefer to work with the energy from inside, making the apprentice become aware of himself and react. Any method is legitimate, as long as it produces the results desired.

"The nagual Julian, for example, combined a merciless efficiency with a tremendous ability to become what he wanted - it is not that he acted; rather, he genuinely transformed himself, moving his assemblage point to the position corresponding to the form of an animal or another person. One of his favorites was the form of a woman. Once, in the shape of a beautiful girl, he seduced his apprentice Juan Matus, who at that time was barely twenty years old, and hot as a young bull. When they were both in bed, he moved his assemblage point back to its habitual position and was a man again, which made the youth run terrified from the room.

"For a mentality like the one Juan Matus had at that time, the impact was devastating. It demolished his stereotypes. It was a grotesque joke, but uniquely effective. In one slash, it broke his inclination to surrender to the first female who made herself available.

"Don Juan never forgave his teacher for the joke, but as time passed, he learned how to laugh at the story."

At this point, Carlos allowed a small round of questions.

One of the present interrogated him regarding celibacy; whether it was indispensable or not for sorcerers, and what the advantages were.

He answered:

"A priori, sorcerers are neither for nor against anything. They see that everything depends on the congenital disposition of energy. There are some who are born with the necessary passion to make love every day, while others don't even have enough for a masturbation. Some recover their luminous totality by means of discipline, others have the appearance of strainers and will die incomplete. All these factors modify and determine the behavior of sorcerers regarding sex.

"What characterizes sorcerers is their refusal to be victims of the collective reproductive command, and their ability to choose a responsible use for their energy. Also, none of them can be trapped in any sexual category. They are free, they proceed every moment according to what power indicates to them. To have that vision, they cultivate a sobriety that the ordinary person doesn't know."

He explained that, in general, the new seers opt for a position of celibacy and self-sufficiency, because they are very greedy with their energy and they prefer to dedicate it to the expansion of their awareness. They have witnessed worlds on their journeys into infinity that make all other things seem pale and without attraction, even the sexual act.

"Don Juan said that making love is for those who don't have attachments."

Responding to another question, he said that there is no such thing as 'a sexual problem', only individuals with their own and very particular dilemmas to solve.

"To see it in a generic form is a trap, because it makes us dilute our responsibility and excuse ourselves with the notion that everybody else is the same as we are. Like birth and death, to procreate is an individual act, a gift which the Eagle has granted us. What sorcerers demand is something very simple: Responsibility.

"The society in which we live is a school where they force us to comply with astonishingly cruel orders. We become old, and making love turns into a grotesque parody. Society imposes a drainage on us, a preset behavior that doesn't stop until there is not a single blink of light left in us.

"I had an example of this in my grandfather. The old man used to say: 'You cannot fuck them all, but you have to try!' He already had one foot in the grave, and still kept reacting the way they had taught him. He spent half his time getting a woman and the other half working to maintain her, and he never realized that he had never been shown

"Finally, on his deathbed, the old man became bitter with the idea that his lovers didn't want him for his manliness anymore, but for his money. 'She doesn't love me!' he whimpered, and his grandsons assured him: 'She does love you, grandpa!' The stupid man died this way, screaming: 'Here I come, mommy!'

"Is it necessary to be a sorcerer to grasp that this is not all we can have as human beings?"

He admitted that, before deciding to practice the warrior's way, he believed he was a seductive man and he behaved as one, driven by the latin male stereotype,

"Once I seduced a girl and brought her to my car. We both got so horny that the windshield got all steamed up with all the kisses and hugs we gave each other. When I was most turned on, I discovered that the supposed girl was a man!

"Another time I fell sincerely in love with a young girl, but eventually I began to suspect that she cheated on me. I changed

my car and stayed watching from the corner of her house. The other one arrived. When I asked her to explain, she told me: 'With you, it's love, and with him it's just sex!'

"This kind of encounters made me decide to behave with more moderation in my love affairs. But the pressure of my stereotype was too strong. I continued to spend my energy on sex according to the pattern of my race, until Don Juan gave me the choice: Either I had to calm down, or abandon the apprenticeship."

Responding to another question, he maintained that the best way of stopping the energy drainage that takes place through sexuality, is learning how to make magnanimous gestures which counter and loosen the fixation of our attention.

"We have received life as a cosmic gift, and it is our privilege to reflect that gesture with total detachment. Thanks to his indifference, the warrior is in the position of turning his love into a blank check, unconditional, an abstract affection, because it does not start from desire. What a marvelous thing!

"Contrary to what a man in the street thinks, the nature of sorcerers is telluric, passionate. But the object of their passion is no longer carnal. They have seen the glue that ties all things together, a wave of passion that floods the universe and cannot be stopped, because, should that happen, everything would be reduced to nothing.

"Through their seeing, they have established their base on the cornerstone of awareness, the most powerful state of individual attention. Their love is an overpowering reality that vibrates in every breath, is expressed in every gesture, and given meaning in every word; it is a force which impels them to explore, to take risks, and to evolve, constantly bringing out the best of themselves.

"Sorcerers have discovered the most refined form of love, because they love themselves. They know that all we give out is a reflection of what we have inside. They have put the power of

passion to the service of being, and it gives them the necessary impulse to undertake the only quest that counts: The quest for oneself."

Recapitulation

When revising my notes, I discovered that another topic Carlos repeatedly referred to in his talks was the concept of recapitulation. He claimed that it is the exercise to which sorcerers dedicate most of their time.

Once he remarked that, in spite of the energy drainage we are subjected to through social interaction, we all have an option, because the sealed nature of our luminous configuration allows us to restart from zero any time, and to recover our totality.

"It is never too late", he said. "While we are alive, there is always a way of conquering any kind of blockage. The best way to recover the luminous fibers we have lost is by calling our energy back. The most important part is to take the first step. For those who are interested in saving and recovering their energy, the only way open to us is the recapitulation.

"A sorcerer knows that if we don't go for our ghosts, they will come for us. For that reason he leaves nothing unresolved. He recounts his past, looks for the magical joint - the exact moment when he was involved in somebody's destiny - and applies all his concentration to that point, and unties the knots of intent.

"Sorcerers say that we live our life from a distance, as if it were a memory. We spend life hooked, hurt by something that happened thirty years ago and carrying a burden that doesn't make sense anymore. 'I don't forgive it!' we scream, but it is not true, it is ourselves we don't forgive!

"The emotional commitments we make with people are like investments we have made along the way. We must be completely insane to leave our heritage thrown away like that!

"The only way we can become complete again, is by picking up that investment, reconciling ourselves with our energy, and dissipating the heavy burden of feelings. The best method the sorcerers have discovered for this is to remember the events of our personal history until we have completely digested them. Recapitulation takes you out of the past, and inserts you into the now.

"We cannot escape having been born as bored fucks, nor having invested most of our luminosity in making children or in maintaining tiring relationships. But we can recapitulate; it cancels out the energetic effects of those acts.

"Fortunately, in the realm of energy, things like time and space don't exist. So it is possible to return to the place and to the same moment when the events happened, and relive them. It is not very difficult, since we all know very well where we are hurting.

"To recapitulate is to stalk our routines, subjecting them to a systematic and merciless scrutiny. It is an activity that allows us to visualize our life as a totality, and not just as a succession of moments. However, and although this may seem strange, only sorcerers recapitulate as an exercise; other people only happen to do it by chance.

"Recapitulation is the heritage of the old seers, the basic practice, the essence of sorcery. Without it, there is no path. Don Juan used to disparagingly refer to apprentices who had not recapitulated as

'radioactive'. Don Genaro would not even shake hands with me, and if I touched him accidentally, he would run to wash himself as if I had infected him. He said I was full of dirt and it was seeping out through every pore of my skin. With that comedy routine, he installed in me the idea that recapitulating is an elementary act of hygiene."

In another lecture, Carlos referred to a kind of luminous Stagnation, which he described as a fixation of our attention that blocks the flow of energy. He said that this happens when we refuse to face facts and try to protect ourselves by hiding behind evasive actions. Also, when we leave pending matters unresolved, or make commitments that tie us down.

The consequence of that kind of stagnation is that the person ceases to be himself. When being pressured by the chain of decisions that he has made during his life, he can no longer act in a deliberate manner and he becomes entangled in the circumstances, This situation can escalate to the point of mental or physical illness, and can only be resolved through recapitulation.

He maintained that, in essence, to recapitulate consists of making a list of wounds caused by our interactions. The next step is to travel back to the moment when the events took place, in order to reabsorb what belongs to us, and return what belongs to others.

"The warrior begins rewinding his day. He reconstructs conversations, deciphers meanings, remembers faces and names, looks for shades and insinuations, dissects his own emotional reactions and those of others. He doesn't leave anything to chance, grabs the memories of the day one by one and cleans them through his breathing.

"He also examines entire chapters and categories of his life. For example, partners he has had, houses he has lived in, schools, work places, friends and enemies, fights and happy moments, and so on. The ideal thing is to attack the task in chronological order, from the most recent memory until the most distant that it is possible to evoke. But in the beginning it is easier to do it by topics.

"A very profitable form of the exercise, accessible to all of us, is the fortuitous recapitulation. If you think about it, we are constantly recapitulating. All memories which conform to our internal dialogue can be called that. However, we evoke them in an involuntary way. Instead of stalking them in silence, we judge

them and interact with them viscerally. That is pitiful. A warrior takes advantage of the opportunity, because those memories, seemingly random, are warnings from our silent side."

He pointed out that to recapitulate, no special conditions are necessary. We can try the exercise any time, any place; wherever we feel moved to do it.

"Warriors recapitulate when they are walking down the road, in the bathroom, when working or when eating; whenever it is possible! The important thing is to do it."

He added that it takes no definite posture. The only requirement is to be comfortable, so the physical body doesn't demand attention or interfere with the memories.

"However, sorcerers take the exercise very seriously. Some use wooden boxes, raised sleeping platforms, closets, or caves. Others build a seat in the highest branches of a big tree, or dig a hole in the ground and cover it with branches. A good practice is to recapitulate

sitting on the bed, in darkness, before lying down to sleep. Any means that isolates us from the environment is good for formal recapitulation.

"Once we have located an event and recreated each of its parts, we have to inhale to recover the energy that we left behind and exhale fibers that others deposited in us. Breathing is magical, because it is a function that gives life."

Carlos explained that this kind of breathing should be accompanied by a lateral movement of the head, which sorcerers call 'to fan the event.'

Somebody asked him if it is necessary to breathe from right to left or vice versa.

He answered:

"What does it matter? It is energy work; there is no fixed pattern. What counts is the intent. Breathe in when you try to recover something, and blow back all that doesn't belong to you. If you do that with the totality of your history, you will stop living entangled in a chain of memories and instead, you will be focused in the present. Seers describe that effect as facing facts as they are, or seeing time objectively."

They asked him what we have to do with our memories once we locate them; whether it means to examine them with some psychoanalytical method or something like that.

He answered:

"It is not necessary to do anything in particular. Memories will find their own course, and luminosity is reordered by itself through the breathing. Just try it, make yourself available; the spirit will tell you how to do it.

"Recapitulation starts from inside and sustains itself. It is matter of silencing the mind, and our energy body will take control, doing what is a delight for it to do. You feel well, comforted; far from draining you, it gives you rest. Your body perceives it as an inexplicable energy bath.

"But you should have the correct attitude. Don't confuse the exercise with a psychological question. If what you need is interpretations, go to the psychiatrist! He will tell you what to do, to continue being the idiot that you are. Neither should you try to find a 'lesson'. Stories with a moral only exist in children's books.

"Recapitulation is a specialized form of stalking, and should be undertaken with a high sense of strategy. It is about understanding and putting our existence in order, seeing it as it is, without remorse, reproaches, or congratulations, with total indifference and in a spirit of fluidity, even of humor, because nothing in our history is more important than anything else, and all relationships, in the end, are ephemeral.

"The important thing is to begin, because the energy we recover from the first intent will give us the power to continue recapitulating more and more intricate aspects of our lives. First, it is necessary to go for the strongest investments, which are the most harrowing feelings. Then we go for those memories that are buried so deeply that we thought we had forgotten them, but they are there.

"In the beginning, recapitulating can be hard work, because our mind is not accustomed to that discipline. But, after closing the most painful wounds, energy will recognize itself and we become addicted to the exercise. In that way, each particle of light, which we recover, helps us to gain more.

"The moment you begin to prepare to voluntarily unravel the plots of your personal history, you will be taking a decisive step."

Responding to another question, he said that recapitulation doesn't have an end; it should last until the end of our days and beyond.

"I stretch my fibers every night while remembering what happened during the day. This way, my list of events stays updated. But once a year, I give myself over to a more complete and total exercise, for which I move away from everything for several weeks."

He warned us that, just because it's a daily practice, we must not see the exercise as a routine.

"If we don't recover the totality of our energy, we will never achieve the power of our decisions; there will always be a background noise, a foreign command. And without the power of his decisions, a man is nothing.

"Reliving events is ideal, because it cleans the wounds of the past and clears up any congestion of the energy conduits. In this way, you break the fixation of other people's gaze, you expose the patterns of people's behavior, and nothing can hook you again.

You become a sovereign being; you decide what you want to make of yourself."

Another question concerned the effects of recapitulation on awareness.

He maintained that the exercise has two main effects.

"The immediate effect is that it stops our internal dialogue. When a warrior is able to stop his dialogue, he tightens the relationship with his energy. It liberates him from the obligation of memory, and from the burden of feelings, and leaves a residual energy that he can invest in enlarging the frontiers of his perception. A warrior begins to appreciate the real thing, not the interpretation of it. For the first time, he comes into contact with the consensus of sorcerers, which is the description of a reality inconceivably integrated.

"It's normal that a warrior at this stage begins to laugh at anything, because energy provides happiness. Thanks to his recapitulation, he is happy, overflowing, jumps like a child. On the other hand, he begins to become a fearsome person, since, having his luminosity intact and his life clean, decisions will no longer be an obstacle for him. He will decide what is necessary the moment he wants to, and that, to other people, is scary.

"This is also the time when the warrior requires an extra dose of sobriety and sanity, because without it he would take unnecessary risks, endangering both his own security and the security of others.

"Another effect of recapitulation is that it works as an invitation to the spirit, and makes it want to come and live with us. In other words: To remember our past is the most effective method to unite the physical body and the energy body, which have been separated for years."

He went on to say that the sorcerer who has managed to compress the thickest part of his energy is in a state where he may intend a

feat of perceptual prowess: Intending a copy of his life experience, in order to deceive death.

"That is the final objective of recapitulation: To create a double, and get ready to leave. You don't have to be a sorcerer to understand the importance of all this. To die in debt is a pitiful way of dying. On the other hand, to have a double to offer the Eagle guarantees that you will be able to continue ahead.

"The fight of sorcerers is heroic. Recapitulating impeccably the content of their lives, they pick up the fibers which drained their attention, and return to those they have known all the attention they have given them. In that way, they arrive at a state of balance which allows them to leave with all their awareness. Their memories, coherent, refined, and integrated, work as an independent being, which serves as a ticket they hand over in exchange for their awareness. The Eagle accepts that effort as a payment, and steps aside. Our replica is sufficient to satisfy its demand.

"Seers see that moment as an explosion of energy which aligns their encapsulated awareness with the totality of emanations out there, and their assemblage point expands infinitely, like a vortex of light."

In another talk, he referred to a method designed by the new seers, which can be helpful in the exercise of recapitulation. He stated:

"One of the tasks of sorcerers is to constantly analyze the insinuations of the spirit. For this purpose, they often use a book of memorable events, a map of those occasions when the spirit intervened in their lives, forcing them to make decisions - voluntarily or involuntarily."

He explained that the advantage of this technique is that when we write, we detach ourselves from things and events, at least to a minimal extent, and thus we are able to focus on them with more objectivity.

"It is not about describing our daily routines, but of being attentive to the strange moments in which intent is manifested. Those are magical junctures, because they produce changes and they put us face to face with the meaning of our existence."

As requested, he gave us some examples of this kind of events.

"Although signs of the spirit are a personal matter, there are ordinary events that in general mark people's life, like being born, choosing a career, intertwining your destiny with another person, or having children. Also illnesses and serious accidents, because they establish a nexus with death. For those who have the fortune of finding a conduit of spirit in the shape of a nagual, this is, certainly, the most memorable event of all.

"The interventions of intent are precursors, very significant memories for a warrior, and they can be used as reference points of where to start when one is exploring episodes of personal history. It requires speed and clarity to select them and to synthesize them, extracting the personal stuff and leaving the magical essence. When properly done, they become what the new seers call abstract centers of perception, a matrix of intent, which a warrior has the duty of deciphering."

The Threshold Of Silence

One of Carlos' characteristics was that he was unpredictable. Sometimes he arrived on time to his appointments, other times he was an hour late. The system had its advantages; it made the less interested stand up and leave, and forced the more committed to cultivate patience.

That afternoon the appointment was at the University of Mexico.

Among many other questions, he was asked if he believed in God.

In answering, Carlos asked us not to confuse his words with a religious message.

"Sorcerers," he said, "abide by their experience. They have changed 'believing' for seeing. They speak of the spirit, not because they believe in its existence, but because they have seen it. But they don't see it as a loving father who watches over us from up above. For them, the spirit is something much more direct and immediate, a state of awareness which transcends reason.

"Everything that reaches our senses is a sign. The only thing you need to have is the necessary speed to silence your mind and capture the message. By means of these indications, spirit talks to us in a very clear voice."

One of the people present remarked that, even taken as a metaphor, the idea of listening to the spirit or speaking with it had an excessively religious air.

But Carlos was adamant in his definition:

"That voice is not a metaphor! It is literal! Sometimes it speaks in words, other times it just whispers, or presents a scene before our eyes, like a movie. In that way, the spirit transmits its commands to us, which can be summarized in a single expression: 'Intent, intent!'

"The voice of the spirit speaks equally to everyone, but we don't realize it. We are so preoccupied with our thoughts that instead of making silence and listening, we prefer all kinds of subterfuges. That's why the reminding voice exist."

They asked him what the reminding voice was.

He answered:

"It's a resource of attention, a way of accessing another level of awareness. We can use almost anything to tune in to the spirit, because, finally, it is behind all that exists. But certain things attract us more than others.

"In general, people have their prayers, their amulets, or elaborate rituals, private and collective. The ancient sorcerers were prone to mysticism; they used astrology, oracles and incantations, magical sticks, anything that could deceive the vigilance of reason.

"But for the new seers, those resources are a waste and they hide a danger: They can deviate a person's attention so that, instead of focusing on his immediate bond with the spirit, he becomes addicted to symbols. Today's warriors prefer less ostentatious methods. Don Juan recommended intending inner silence directly."

Emphasizing the words, he specified that sorcery is the art of silence.

"Silence is a passageway between worlds. When our mind stays silent, incredible aspects of our being emerge. Starting from that moment, a person becomes a vehicle of intent, and all his acts begin to ooze power.

"During my apprenticeship, my benefactor showed me inexplicable feats which frightened me, but at the same time stirred up my ambition; I wanted to be as powerful as he was! I often asked him how I could learn his tricks, but he placed a finger on his lips and stared at me. It took years before I could appreciate the magnificent lesson of his answer. The key to sorcery is silence."

One of the present asked him to define that concept.

He answered:

"It is not definable. When you practice it, you perceive it. If you try to understand it, you block it. Don't see it as something difficult or complex, because it is not something from another world; it is just silencing the mind.

"I could tell you that silence is like a dock where ships arrive; if the dock is occupied, there is no space for anything new. That's my image of the matter, but the truth is I don't know how to speak about it."

He explained that inner silence is not only the absence of thoughts. Rather, it is about suspending judgment, witnessing without interpreting. He maintained that entering silence could be defined, in the typically contradictory way of sorcerers, as learning 'how to think without words.'

"For many of you, what I am saying doesn't make sense, because you are accustomed to consult your mind about everything. The ironic thing is that, for starters, our thoughts are not even ours. They sound through us, which is different. And since they have been pestering us ever since we learnt to use our reason, we have ended up getting used to them.

"If you ask the mind, it will tell you that the purpose of sorcerers is nonsense, because it cannot be rationally demonstrated. Instead of advising you to go and verify that purpose honestly, it will order

you to hide behind a solid block of interpretations. Therefore, if you want to have a chance, there is only one possible way out: Disconnect the mind! Freedom is achieved without thinking.

"I know people who were able to stop their internal dialogue, and they no longer interpret, they are pure perception; they are never disappointed or regretful, because everything they do starts from the center for decisions. They have learned to deal with their mind in terms of authority, and they live in the most authentic state of freedom."

He continued by saying that silence is our natural condition.

"We were born from silence and there we will return. What contaminate us are all the superfluous ideas that percolate through us, due to our collective way of living.

"Our relatives, the primates, have very ingrained social customs whose objective is to diminish the levels of tension inside the group. For example, they dedicate much of their time to caressing each other, smelling each other, or picking each other's lice.

"Those customs are genetic, so they have not died; they are here inside, within you and within me. It's just that human beings have learned how to substitute them with the exchange of words. Every time we have an opportunity, we tranquillize each other by talking about something. After millennia of coexistence, we have internalized these exchanges to the point that, whether we are asleep or awake, our mind is never quiet, it is always talking to itself.

"Don Juan affirmed that we are predatory animals who, by the power of domestication, have been converted into grass-eaters. We spend our lives regurgitating an endless list of opinions on almost everything. We receive thoughts in clusters; one connects with the other one, until the entire space of the mind is packed full. That noise has no use, because, practically in its entirety, it is devoted to the enlargement of the ego.

"Because it goes against everything that we've been taught since we were children, silence should be attempted in a spirit of combat. At this time you have a great advantage: The experience of stalkers. Sorcerers nowadays recommend that we pass through the world without getting any attention, treating everything equally. A warrior stalker becomes the owner of the situation - for better or for worse, because there is something terribly effective about acting without the mind."

They asked him to give us some practical exercises to achieve silence.

He answered that that was a very private matter, because the sources of the internal dialogue are fed by our personal history.

"However, through millennia of practice, sorcerers have observed that, deep down, we are very similar. And there are situations that have the effect of silencing all of us.

"My teacher gave me various techniques to silence my mind which, well understood, can be reduced to one: Intent. Silence is intended crudely: making the effort. It is about insisting, over and over again. It does not mean to repress our thoughts, but rather learning how to control them.

"Silence begins with a command, an act of will, which becomes the command of the Eagle. However, we must keep in mind that as long as we impose silence on ourselves, we will never truly be there, but in the imposition. We have to learn to transform will into intent.

"Silence is calm, it is to yield, to let yourself go. It produces a sensation of absence, like the one a child feels when he stares at fire. How wonderful to remember that feeling, and know that it can be evoked again!

"Silence is the fundamental condition of the path. I spent a lot of years battling to achieve it, but all I did was get entangled in my own attempt. In addition to the habitual conversation that was

always going on in my mind, I began to blame myself for not being able to understand what it was that Don Juan expected from me. Everything changed one day, while I was absent-mindedly contemplating some trees; silence came rushing from them like a wild beast,

stopping my world and hurtling me into a paradoxical state, for it was new and at the same time well-known.

"The technique of observation - that is, of contemplating the world without preconceived ideas - works very well with the elements. For example with flames, running water, cloud formations, or the sunset. The new seers call it 'to deceive the machine', because, in essence, it consists of learning to intend a new description.

"We have to fight boldly to get it, but, after it happens, the new state of awareness is sustained naturally. You have a foot inside the door, the door is already open, and it is just a matter of accumulating enough energy to pass through to the other side.

"It's important that our intent is intelligent. The effort it takes to achieve silence would count for nothing, if we didn't first create conditions favorable to sustaining it. Therefore, besides the training in observation of the elements, a warrior is forced to do something very simple, but very difficult: Ordering his life.

"We all live in a chain of intensity which we call 'time'. Since we can't see its source, we never stop to think of its end. While we are young we feel eternal, and when we grow old, the only thing left is to complain about the 'wasted time'. But that is an illusion, time is not wasted, we waste ourselves!

"The idea that we have time is a misunderstanding that makes us waste energy on all kinds of commitments. When a man connects with inner silence, he puts a new value on his time. So another way to define it would be to say that silence is an acute awareness of the present.

"An infallible method for reaching silence is not-doing, an activity that we program with our mind, but which has the virtue of

silencing our thoughts once it is in motion. Don Juan called that kind of technique 'to remove one thorn with another'."

As examples of not-doings, he mentioned listening in the dark, changing the priority of our senses and the command that compels us to fall asleep as soon as we close our eyes. Also, to talk with plants, to stand on our heads, to walk backwards, to observe the shadows and the distance or spaces between the leaves of trees.

"All those activities are among the most effective to silence our internal dialogue, but they have a defect: We cannot sustain them for a long time. After a while, we are forced to return to our routines. A not-doing that is exaggerated will automatically lose its power and become a doing.

"If what we want is to accumulate deep silence with a lasting effect, the best not-doing is solitude. Together with energy saving and abandoning those who consider us 'facts', learning how to be alone is the third practical principle of the path.

"The warrior's world is the most solitary thing there is. Even when several apprentices unite to travel the routes of power together, each one knows that he is alone, that he cannot expect anything from the others, nor can he depend on anybody. The only thing he can do is to share his path with those who accompany him.

"To be alone requires a great effort, because we haven't learned how to overcome the genetic command of socialization yet. In the beginning, an apprentice should be forced by his teacher, through traps if necessary. But after a while he learns how to enjoy it. It is normal that sorcerers look for silence in the solitude of mountains or in the desert, and that they live alone during long periods."

Somebody commented that this was 'a hideous perspective'.

Carlos replied:

"Hideous is to spend our old age like weeping children!

"One of the ironies of modern life is that the more communication increases, the more solitary we feel. Ordinary man's existence is one of harrowing loneliness. He looks for company, but cannot find himself. His love has been devaluated; his dream is pure fantasy. His natural curiosity has become a strictly personal concern, and the only thing he has left is his attachments.

"On the other hand, the warrior's solitude is like a lovers' retreat, a place for those who seek a remote niche to write poems to their love. And the warrior's love is everywhere, because it is this Earth, where he will wander for such a brief time. So, wherever he goes, the warrior surrenders to his romance. Naturally, he will sometimes avoid dealing with the world; inner silence is solitary."

Carlos went on to say that the sorcerers of antiquity used power plants to stop the internal dialogue. But today's warriors prefer less risky and more controlled conditions.

"The same results produced by power plants can be obtained when we are up against the wall. Facing extreme situations, like danger, fear, sensorial saturation, and aggression, something in us reacts and takes control: the mind becomes alert and automatically suspends its chatter. Deliberately creating that situation is called stalking.

"However, the favorite method of warriors is recapitulation. Recapitulation stops the mind in a natural way.

"The main detonators of our thoughts are pending matters, expectations, and defense of the ego. It is very difficult to find a person whose internal dialogue is sincere; usually, we hide our frustrations and go to the opposite extreme: The content of our mind turns into an ode to 'me'.

"To recapitulate puts an end to all that. After a time of sustained effort, something crystallizes there inside. The habitual dialogue becomes incoherent, uncomfortable; the only remedy is to stop it.

"An apprentice in this phase will normally find himself facing a gross-fire. On the one hand is the homogenization of his Assemblage point; and on the other, some enormous parentheses of silence which strain through his mind, breaking it into fragments.

"When the inertia of the internal dialogue is broken, the world is made over and becomes new. The wave of energy feels like an unbearable vacuum opening under his feet. Because of this, a warrior may spend years in an unstable state of mind. The only thing that comforts him

in such a situation is to keep the purpose of his path clear to himself, and not lose, under any circumstances, his perspective of freedom. An impeccable warrior never loses his sanity.

"If, when applying some of these techniques, warriors feel that their minds shiver, and a voice that is not the habitual one begins to whisper things to them, that is normal and they should not be scared. They are not going mad, they are entering into the consensus of sorcerers."

They asked him if moving the assemblage point also attracts silence.

He answered:

"It is the opposite. Inner silence induces displacements of the assemblage point, and these displacements are cumulative. Once a certain threshold is reached, silence can move the point a great distance by itself, but not before."

He explained that the force of collective consent creates a certain inertia that varies from person to person, according to their energetic characteristics. Resistance to the world's description can vary from some seconds to one hour, or more, but it is not eternal. To conquer it by means of a sustained intent is what sorcerers call

'arriving at the threshold of silence.'

"That rupture is felt physically, as a crack in the base of the skull or as the sound of a bell. From that starting point, it becomes a matter of how much power has been accumulated.

"There are those who have stopped their dialogue for some seconds and immediately get scared, begin to wonder about things or describe what they feel to themselves. Others learn how to remain in that state for hours or days, and they even use it for useful activities. For example, there you have my books; on Don Juan's demand, I have written them from a basic state of silence. But experienced sorcerers go even further than that: They can enter the other world in a definite form.

"I met a warrior who lived there almost permanently. When I asked him something, he answered by telling me what he was seeing, without caring if that answer was coherent with my question. He lived beyond my syntax. From my apprentice point of view, of course he was crazy I

"In spite of its indefinable nature, we can measure silence through its results. Its final effect, the one that sorcerers look for with avidity, is that it brings us in tune with a magnificent dimension of our being, where we have access to an instantaneous and total knowledge that is not composed of reasons, but of certainties. Old traditions describe that state as 'the kingdom of Heaven', but sorcerers prefer to give it a less personal name: Silent knowledge.

"You can say that a man who controls silence has cleansed his bond with the spirit, and power rains down on him in streams. A snap of the fingers, pow!, and the world is another. Don Juan referred to that state as 'the deadly somersault of thought', because we begin in the everyday world, but we never return there again."

The strange power of fascination that Carlos' talks had on me, made the mere idea of missing one of those encounters unbearably painful.

I remarked on it once, and he responded:

"You are already hooked! Don Juan always incited everyone who surrounded him to have a romance with knowledge."

I asked him what he meant.

He explained:

"It is the pure desire to know, not to feel apathy, to be vividly interested in what the spirit comes to tell you, without expecting anything from it. Having a passionate romance with knowledge is the only thing that can give us the power we need not to falter, when signs are pointing in the direction of the unknown.

"When his path no longer corresponds to human expectations, when it takes him to situations that challenge his reason, then we can say that a warrior has begun an intimate relationship with knowledge.

"You have had extraordinary luck silencing your mind for a moment and allowing power to point you out. But that is not enough; now you have to adjust yourself to its message, so that your life becomes the life of a warrior. From now on, your work will consist on cultivating an honest and clean bond with infinity."

PART II

WARRIORS' DIALOGUE

Conceptual Saturation

I once told Carlos once how difficult it was for me to understand the postulates of sorcery, and asked him for some definitions which could guide my rationality. But he told me that this was neither possible nor useful, since he didn't live in a reality of ordinary consensus.

"Not even I understand myself," he assured me with absolute seriousness.

He maintained that 'to comprehend' is to fix our attention on a specific point, from where things can be explained. The more accepted that point is by people in general, the truer we find it.

"But the universe is not reasonable, its essence is beyond all description. Security and common sense are islands floating around in a bottomless sea, and we only cling to them out of fear.

"If you continue on the path of knowledge, you will soon discover that explanations are placebos, since they never fulfill what they promise. For each thing they clarify, they generate a trail of contradictions. In fact, we never understand anything; true teaching is physical and we only get it after years of fighting. That is the nature of the lessons of the nagual.

"However, sorcerers have found that it is possible to understand things without reasoning them out, and that has led them to practice. An hour of practice can sweep years of explanations off the table, and real results appear, results that stay with you forever. As you turn yourself into a witness of power, the obsessive pressure of your mind to be in charge will be cancelled out, and in its place the childlike spirit of adventure and discovery will be reborn in you. In that state you don't think anymore, you act."

Then he asked me to what extent my interest in the knowledge of the sorcerers of ancient Mexico was honest. I assured him that there could be no doubts about my sincerity, and that I was willing to make any effort, except to transgress my principles concerning honesty and charity.

He shook my hand effusively.

"You are the ideal candidate!" he exclaimed, I don't know whether he was joking or sincere.

To my surprise, he stated that my principles - which were not mine, but those of any intelligent and normal person - were a very good base to work from.

"They are your basic materials. But now you have to transform them into an unbending intent, because as long as they just remain

'good intentions', they won't serve you in any way."

After a pause, he added:

"I can help you to elucidate the beliefs of the seers of ancient

Mexico by means of a combination of studies and experiences."

Interpreting my silence as agreement, he continued by describing an action program that I should incorporate in my daily life, based on three points stopping my internal dialogue with the help of pure intent, compacting my energy by means of rearranging my way of life, and loosening the bounds of my mind in order to dream. He said the program was designed to help me loosen a little the collective fixations, and encourage me to enter into a practical commitment with the postulates of sorcerers.

I accepted his proposal and prepared to listen. But Carlos was anything but a good instructor. When I read his books, at least I had the opportunity to pause, to reread a sentence or to leave everything for later. But when I was right there beside him, his impatience and his uncontainable torrent of words overwhelmed

me. Also, he gave the impression that he was avoiding, in every possible way, establishing a human relationship.

When I pointed out to him that his method didn't work, he told me that it was a deliberate hunting strategy. Apparently, he was stalking the routines of my mind through what he called 'conceptual saturation.'

I asked him what he meant by that, and he explained:

"Reason becomes saturated when you give to it too much content to work with. Don Juan used to say that strange concepts, like those sorcerers deal with, should be repeated to the point of fatigue. That way, they gain a definite place in our awareness, burdened by the weight of so many trivial matters.

"What scares us in front of a sorcerers' lesson is that even if we don't want to, we are constantly evaluating everything that comes to us. When the object of that analysis is an irrational proposition, it requires a lot of power to avoid prejudice.

"If you want to know the magical side of the world, be implacable with your reason. Don't let it make itself comfortable; take your rational thoughts to their limit, to the point of rupture. Under such circumstances, your mind will only have two options: to impose itself, forcing you to abandon the apprenticeship, or to be quiet, leaving you alone."

An Inventory Of Beliefs

"How is your recapitulation going?"

His question caught me unaware. I answered that I had still not tried the exercise, because I was waiting for conditions at home to be favorable.

He gave me a very serious, almost reproachful look and commented that, for sorcerers, the totality of a path can be summed up in its first step.

"That means that the ideal conditions are here and now."

Softening the tone of his voice, he granted:

"It happens to everyone at first. To observe our life is an agitating exercise, because to get to the bottom of things scares us, and it is easy to postpone it from one day to the next. But, if we insist, after a time of scrutiny we begin to discover that what we always found to be obvious and correct ways of thinking are in fact implanted beliefs.

"The ideas we become addicted to are made up of the densest matter in our mental contamination. In general, they all start from a defect of syntax. If the way we speak changes, they stop making sense and are substituted by new ideas. That's why there are so many belief systems in the world.

"From the center of silent knowledge we all know that, that's why we are so rarely willing to practice our beliefs. We can spend a lifetime speaking of loving our fellow man, or turning the other cheek, but who dares to actually do it? There you have the wars for religion motives, where people are killed because of the peculiar way they pronounce God's name.

"Sorcerers know that beliefs based on ideas are false."

He explained to me that the starting point of our convictions is usually something that someone told us in an imperative or persuasive tone when we were children, before we had our own inventory of experiences for comparison. Or it is one of the effects of the massive and subliminal propaganda to which modern man is subjected. Frequently, they come from a sudden and deep emotional outburst, like that suffered by those who allow themselves to be swept away by religious hysteria. That modality of belief is merely associative.

"At the core of each one of our actions, customs, or reactions, there is a hidden belief. Therefore, the initial task on the path of knowledge is to make an inventory of all those things we have placed our faith in."

He suggested that I dedicate a new notebook to that exercise, where I should write down all my beliefs. He assured me that this practice would help to make a map of my motivations and attachments.

"In each case," he said, "you should look for the source of your beliefs, and make a profound analysis of each one. Determine when and why it arose, what was there before that, how you felt, and how much your faith has changed over the years. The intention is not to justify anything, but rather simply to get things clear. This exercise is called 'stalking the believer'."

He predicted that the result of the practice would be to liberate me of my second-hand convictions, and emphasized that in the world of sorcerers, only direct experimentation is valid.

Believing Without Believing

I accepted the exercise because I found it inoffensive. For a couple of weeks, I was devoted to classifying everything with which I felt mentally identified. I hoped my inventory would be simple and clear, but I was soon surprised to find that an endless list of thought patterns appeared, sometimes not very coherent in relation to each other.

For example, one of my beliefs was that only when something can be proven and demonstrated can it be called 'certain'. At the same time, another of my beliefs was that a supreme reality, a divine being beyond all experimentation, exists. No matter how much I tried, I could not resolve that contradiction.

In the field of non-beliefs I also had my surprises. The most unpleasant was to discover the way a simple suggestion had blocked an enormous area of possibilities for me. When I began to investigate why it was not honestly possible for me to accept Carlos' statements regarding how, through dreams, you can access other real and complete worlds, I remembered that when I was a child and had a nightmare, my mother used to repeat the refrain of a children's story which said: "Dreams are just dreams."

When we met again, I gave him a superficial account of the results of my investigations. Carlos told me that it was enough; there was already sufficient material to attack the second part of the exercise. Then he suggested that I select the most important one of my beliefs, which served as a base to all the other ones, and stop believing it for a moment. I should do this with each one of them, according to their degree of importance.

"I assure you that it is not difficult!" he added, seeing my bewildered face. "And above all, it won't harm your faith. Remember, it is only an exercise."

I protested. In a decisive tone, I told him that the basis of my principles was my certainty that God exists, and that I was not willing to question it or even analyze that point.

"It is not true!" he screamed. "Your most ingrained conviction is that you are sinful and for that reason you are justified! You can make mistakes, squander your energy, and give in to anger, lasciviousness, whims and fear; after all, you are human, and God always forgives you!"

"Don't fool yourself. Either you choose your belief, or it chooses you. In the first case, it is authentic, it is your ally, it sustains you, and it allows you to manipulate it at will. In the second case, it is an imposition and not worthwhile."

I replied that the exercise that he proposed - treating my faith as casually as a man changing his shirt - was not only blasphemous and mercenary, but the practice would probably end up throwing me into a state of internal confusion.

He observed:

"You don't have to be clear to enter the world of sorcerers!"

"Our idea that truth goes hand-in-hand with clarity is a trap, because the spirit is too inaccessible to be understood with our fragile human mind. As you well know, the essence of religion is not clarity, but faith. But faith is worth nothing in comparison with experience!"

"Sorcerers are practical; from their point of view, what we believe or stop believing is absolutely irrelevant. The stories that we tell ourselves don't matter in the least; what matters is the spirit. When there's power, the content of the mind is something secondary. A sorcerer can be an atheist or a believer, Buddhist, Muslim or Christian, and yet cultivate impeccability - which automatically brings him to power."

His words irritated me beyond reason. When I realized it, I was surprised to find how deeply the Catholic doctrines I learned during my childhood had penetrated. Now that Carlos questioned them, it felt as if he was unfairly robbing me of something very valuable.

He noticed my dilemma and began to laugh.

"Don't confuse things," he told me. "Religions are not remedies, but consequences of the pitiful state of awareness man is in. They are replete with good intentions, but very few people are prepared to fulfill them. If their commitment meant anything of real value, the world would be full of saints, not sinners!"

"The moment ideologies - including nagualism - become widespread, they become cultural mafias, schools to make people sleepy. No matter how subtle their postulates are, and no matter how much they try to validate them with personal corroboration, they end up conditioning our actions according to some form of reward or punishment, and by doing that, they pervert the very essence of the search. If the pillar of my faith is a salary, what merit does it have?"

"Sorcerers love the purity of the abstract. For them, the value of the path with heart is not so much where it takes us but how intensely we enjoy it. Faith certainly has value in an ordinary life, but it is useless against death. Our only hope when facing the inevitable is the warrior's path.

"Sorcerers call the ability to manipulate their mental attachments 'believing without believing'. They have perfected that art to the point where they can identify sincerely with any idea, live it, love it, and discard it if it comes to that, without remorse. And inside that freedom of choice, they ask sorcerers' questions. For example, why accept myself as a sinner, if I can be impeccable?"

After some resistance, I agreed with Carlos that there could not be anything wrong with subjecting my beliefs to a shake.

What I found to be the main effect of the technique of "believing without believing," was that it showed how incredibly fragile my catalog of ideas was. It was prone to disintegrate at the slightest blow. I understood why Don Juan claimed that the world we live in is a magic fabric, the magic of 'the first ring of power'.

Practicing Silence

As a base for inner silence, Carlos suggested that I fight against what he called my 'domestic condition'; that is, my membership in a social group. He referred to it as a first step toward freedom.

"To put our interactions on trial means to analyze all over again a heap of things we have always considered as facts, beginning with our sexual role, and ending with family obligations and the religious and civic commitments we usually involve ourselves in. The purpose is not to judge or to subvert anything, but to observe. Observing, in itself, has an effect on things."

I asked him to explain how the passive act of witnessing can modify anything.

He answered that attention, however tenuous, is never passive, because it is made from the same matter which makes up the universe. Even the mere act of exercising the attention implies an energy transfer.

"It is like the velocity which when being applied to an object, adds mass to it. Likewise, the focus of attention adds reality to things, and that reality has a limit. Beyond that limit, the world we know disintegrates.

"The secret of the sorcerers' marvels is the channeling of attention. It doesn't matter how they apply it, for good or for bad; what changes is the intention, not the force of the focus. For new seers, the magic of sorcery is not in its results, but in the ways we get to them. Therefore, your best intent as an apprentice is to silence your mind."

When I returned to see him I admitted that, although I had spent much time trying to follow his advice, I didn't notice any substantial advance in my struggle to achieve inner silence. On the

contrary, I had noticed that my thoughts were more agitated and more confused than ever.

He explained that this sensation is a normal consequence of the practice.

"Like all beginners, you are trying to classify silence like another element in your inventory of beliefs.

"The objective of your inventory was to make you aware of the weight of our prejudices. We use almost all our available energy on maintaining an image of the world, and we do it by means of conscious or unconscious suggestions.

When an apprentice is liberated from that jail, he has the sensation that he has had fallen into an ocean of peace and silence. It doesn't matter if he speaks, sings, cries, or meditates, that sensation remains.

"In the first stages of the path, it's very difficult to handle silence as a practice, because as soon as we detect an absence of thoughts, a mischievous little voice congratulates us for it. And that automatically breaks the state.

"The problem happens because you confuse the objective of sorcerers with an ideal. The concept of 'silence' is too delicate for a mind like yours, accustomed to classifications. It is obvious that you have thought about the exercise in auditory terms, as a lack of sound. But that's not what it is about.

"What sorcerers want is something simpler. They try to resist the suggestions, and that's all. If you are able to make yourself the owner of your mind, and to think properly, without prejudice or false convictions, you will be able to cancel out the domesticated part of your nature, a supreme achievement. Otherwise, you will not even understand what the exercise is about.

"Once we learn how to prevent them, without being offended by them nor giving them any kind of attention, the commands of the

mind will stay in our interior for some time, but eventually they will leave. So it is not a question of getting rid of them, but rather killing them with boredom.

"To reach that state, you have to rattle your inventory of ideas. I asked you to begin with your beliefs, but it would have worked equally well if, for example, you had listed all your relationships and affections, or the most attractive elements in your personal history, or your hopes, goals, and concerns, or your likes, preferences, and aversions. The important thing is that you become aware of your thought patterns.

"The magic of all inventories is based in the order of its components. When we rattle that order, when it lacks some of the pieces that we gave it, the whole pattern begins to crumble. This is the way it is with routines of the mind; you change one parameter

- suddenly there is an open door where it should be a wall - and that changes everything. The mind trembles!

"That is what you have been experiencing as an extraordinary activation of your interior dialogue. You didn't even notice it before, but now you know it is there. Some day that presence will be so heavy that you will do something about it. That day you will stop being an ordinary man and will become a sorcerer."

The Minimal Chance

In a lecture in which he was explaining to us various methods naguals used to help their apprentices, one of the present, interrupting him, threw this at him:

"Carlos, you always say that without the nagual there is no freedom, but that's because you had a teacher! What can we do, those of us who weren't so lucky?"

He exploded:

"It is not true, you have all the information you need! What more do you want? Do you hope to get everything for free, without any effort? If you believe that somebody else will do the work for you, you are fucked up!"

In a reproachful tone, he made fun of the human laziness which makes us hope that others will do things and give us the greatest possible advantage. He called this 'the antithesis of a warrior's behavior.'

"All that a man needs is the minimal chance: To be made aware of the possibilities discovered by sorcerers. A warrior doesn't go around hoping they will come and kick him in the butt to make him move; he is ahead and he says: 'I can do it! And I can do it alone!'"

There Is No Need For Teachers

Another time, I asked him:

"Carlos, what determines an ordinary man's access to the sorcerers' knowledge?"

"Intent," he answered. "Man's intent has to make an offer to the spirit, and spirit must accept it, putting the means of evolution in his path. In other times, the only available way was to be

directly pointed out to a nagual. Nowadays, an ordinary man has the opportunity to be guided through publications.

"When seeking access to the world of sorcerers, one must be prepared. An accidental encounter with power won't lead to anything, except to a brutal fright for the seeker who, from then on, will swear that sorcery is demon's work, or that everything is sheer falsehood.

"But a poorly conducted preparation, one which foments self-importance instead of increasing wonder and a desire to learn, becomes a near total obstacle for the apprentice. One who comes to the nagual saturated with beliefs on almost everything won't get the chance to continue.

"Therefore, the next requirement before entering the path of knowledge is a profound honesty. It is necessary to empty the harbor to make room for the new ship arriving, and to recognize that when it comes down to it, we don't know anything. Once that degree of preparation has been reached, the rest is a matter of luck. The spirit determines who will be chosen and who won't.

"The answer of the spirit is inscrutable. It happens in unexpected ways and in terms that are almost always incomprehensible to our reason. All we can do is be attentive to the signs, placing ourselves deliberately in their path. When man's intent seals an alliance with the spirit, it is unavoidable that the teacher appears."

I asked him if the nagual could be considered a teacher in the same way as the oriental instructors.

He answered emphatically:

"No! There is no comparison for a very simple reason: A nagual never chooses his apprentices. The spirit is the one who determines through omens who can and who can't be part of a lineage.

"A real teacher is an impeccable warrior who has lost his human form and has a very clear bond with the abstract. So, he doesn't accept volunteers.

"Education systems based on the seeker's spontaneous desire don't get very far, because they are not geared towards realization, but towards the concerns of the ego. All the followers do is to imitate and that doesn't lead anywhere. Therefore, there is no need for teachers.

"After years of learning, I am convinced that all a seeker needs is the opportunity to be made aware of his possibilities, and a commitment to the death with his purpose."

I observed that his statements were contradicting his repeated statements about how, without Don Juan, he would not have achieved anything. He replied:

"Sorcerers make a clear distinction between the concepts of

'spiritual guide' and 'nagual teacher'. The first is an individual who specializes in directing flocks, and the other is an impeccable warrior who knows that his role is limited to serving as a connection with the spirit. The first one will tell you what you want to hear and he will give you the miracles that you want to see, because you interest him as an acolyte; while the

second will be guided by commands of an impersonal power. His help is not altruistic, but a way of paying his old debt with the spirit of man.

"The nagual is not a benevolent type; he doesn't come to please us, but to wake us up, and he will do it with a stick if necessary, because he doesn't feel any compassion. When intervening in the life of his apprentices, he can produce a condition of such agitation in them that their latent energies are activated."

To Know Oneself

The conversation turned to the tendency that human beings have of behaving in imitative ways, something that he categorized as

'the behavior of primates.'

"Our great opportunity and at the same time our great anxiety, is an abyss of silent knowledge which is still inside each one of us. Below the noise of the mind, we all have the sensation that there is something indefinite, something that makes us grab anything which will alleviate this pressure of the unknown. Frequently, that feeling takes us to fanaticism, and there are always those willing to profit from other people's faith."

"Are all teachers frauds, then?"

"What I have seen is that most of them are as asleep as their followers, but they have learned how to hide it. Imagine a planet where all the residents are blind; among them circulates the myth that it is possible to see, but no one has verified it. One day someone arrives and says: 'I can see!' What can they do? Either believe, or not believe, and there will always be some who hope. It doesn't matter if the teacher is also blind; it's very easy for him to take advantage of the situation.

"The Eagle doesn't demand that you revere it, only that you fill yourself with awareness. To fall on your knees before the unknown is totally useless, but to do it before another human being is the pinnacle of idiocy.

"The ape that we have inside yearns to have someone to guide him, he needs to believe that there are superior entities who can magically solve his problems. As children, we are always hoping that somebody will show up and take care of the situation. From this, cults are born that, in essence, are ways of leaving the responsibility for one's own growth in other people's hands.

"We have been deceived. We have been told that we are special because we are rational, but that is not true. The human being wants desperately to obey, and dies from fear when his valuable beliefs are removed. We are like the fish that clean fish tanks, always with the mouth open, devouring any debris that is thrown to us. Meanwhile, we ignore the source of life and knowledge that we have inside.

"I am going to tell you a very old and well-known, but always new story. The gods were wondering where to hide wisdom, to get it out of man's reach. In the mountains? He would climb them. In the ocean? He would find it. Space, the moon and stars were equally discarded; some day they would be explored. Finally, the gods came to the conclusion that the best place to hide it was inside man, because that's one place he will never look for it.

"And what did man do? Instead of examining himself with total honesty, he looked for a teacher.

"To become responsible for one's own existence is an anomaly, a violation of laws, a state of passion out of the ordinary, a fight that demands your entire life. It is the only procedure that will renew our energy. I don't know if you will be able to understand this detail: To know yourself is an intent of warriors. Nobody can intend it for you!"

Power Plants

A man was sitting on a bench, almost hidden behind a newspaper stand. I noticed him, but in such a subconscious way that I had walked some twenty meters past him before it struck me. I turned; the man looked at me smiling. It was Carlos.

He hugged me effusively and remarked that an encounter of that nature had to be taken as an omen.

"Now, I am all yours," he exclaimed. "Ask!" I

saw my opportunity.

In various conversations, Carlos had categorically stated that hallucinogenic plants are not advisable for a seeker of knowledge. However, in his first books he had written exactly the opposite, and he even gave extensive exercises on their use, presenting himself as an example of the power of those plants.

This was a matter that interested me intensely, I had never experienced in my own body the incredible forms of perception that he described and I felt a great curiosity. So, taking advantage of his good mood, I asked him to clear up the contradiction.

When he heard my question, his enthusiasm cooled down. The topic seemed to affect him deeply. After a few seconds of reflection he told me that a sign from the spirit had determined the change in his perspective.

"In 1971, after publishing my second book, I received an uncomfortable visit. United States government agents came to one of my presentations and they informed me that I was becoming an

idol of juvenile drug addicts, and that they would expel me from the country unless I modified my attitude.

"At first I didn't see any reason to concern myself with these threats. But later I investigated a little, and the situation made an impression on me. Many students were taking Don Juan's teachings as an academic permission to get high. My name was mentioned everywhere as an authority on drugs. But I didn't want to be the patron saint of anything!"

"I took my dilemma to Don Juan, who laughed at the whole thing and told me that a principle of stalkers is not to confront anybody, and certainly not people more powerful than themselves. 'You have blundered in among the hooves of horses, and you have to get yourself out of there. I suggest you take care of your learning; the rest, what does it matter?' That advice made me decide to have a more cautious-attitude in my next publications.

"Personally, I neither approve nor disapprove of anything, since I am not one to judge in the matter and, also, my learning was a result of such techniques. However, in public I cannot encourage use of the plants, because my books are read by all kinds of people and everyone interprets them in their own way.

"Without qualified supervision, power plants can produce regrettable results, since they move the assemblage point abruptly and erratically, and in the long term, they take their toll on a person's health and sanity, and sometimes they will take a practitioner's life. On one occasion, they warned me that the father of a student was looking for me with a gun to kill me, because he blamed me for his son's death after experimenting with drugs.

"It is a very delicate matter, all this about power plants. If you want to understand it, you have to abandon the folkloric vision that almost everybody has of sorcerers. True Toltec warriors are not fanatical about dope or about anything else; their behavior is strictly dictated by impeccability.

"I have already explained to you that Don Juan only used plants with me in the beginning of my apprenticeship, and only because I was exceptionally fixed in my routines. The more obstinate I got, the more plants he gave me. In that way he was able to loosen my assemblage point the minimum necessary for me to grasp the premises of his teachings. However, in spite of his careful conduct, it had a high cost for me and it's one of the main reasons why today my health is so deteriorated.

"Power plants have a limit and a sorcerer finds it very soon. They are an initial stimulus, but they cannot become a base to work from, because they don't have the capacity to take us to complete worlds, which is what a seer looks for."

"Do you mean that the movement they induce in the assemblage point is not sufficiently great?"

"It's the opposite, they produce a deep and unpredictable shake. A real sorcerer can manage that, but not an apprentice. If he uses them to break his perceptual limits, the beginner will be tempted to classify everything he is witnessing as hallucinations; after all, everything started from a plant! In that way, he will never reach the degree of commitment needed to fix his assemblage point in a new position. Plants take you quickly and easily to another world, but they don't allow you to stalk it; that is their limitation.

"The best way of deploying our perception is through dreaming. As a method, dreaming is just as simple but less risky, more comprehensive and, above all, much more natural.

"The goal of an apprentice is to take the reins of his assemblage point. Once he is able to displace it, he has to repeat those movements without external help, by force of discipline and impeccability. Then we can say the warrior has found an ally."

The Trap Of Fixation

In one of his lectures, Carlos explained that nothing is as fragile as the fixation of the assemblage point. He maintained that the art of agreeing is so special that we spend twenty years of daily training to achieve it. Those who do achieve it, we call 'adults', and those who don't are 'crazy'.

"However, nothing is easier for us than moving to new universes. To do it, we just have to return to what we were."

He explained that the fixation of the assemblage point consumes enormous quantities of energy, and produces a static vision of the world. The energy used in that way is dispersed all through our luminosity and it winds up crammed in along its borders, where it forms dense masses that create a reflection of the self. Under these circumstances, to change the fixation becomes an exhausting task.

"To break the trap of fixation, one should try any recourse. In most cases, only a push coming from the outside can cause the movement of a person's assemblage point. When we have a great, great deal of luck, we receive that push through the blow of a nagual.

"Once the initial displacement is achieved, the warrior should fight for control of his attention, by means of exercises of intent and practicing dreaming. Dreaming is the escape door for the human race, and it is the only thing that can give our existence its appropriate dimension."

Dreaming And Awakening

Carlos had a great ability to turn conversations towards the practical side of things. In spite of the extraordinary sharpness of his intellect, he hated it if conversations sank to the level of mere speculations. I often watched how he in an ingenious but firm manner would unravel the argumentation of the most rigid speakers, confronting them with the topic of results.

In my case, his method for silencing my attacks of rationality consisted of reducing everything to an immediate proposition and, according to him, something not very difficult: The control of dreams.

However, for me dreaming was the hardest aspect of his teaching. First, because I could not distinguish the concept of 'dreaming' from ordinary dreams, which are two totally different things for a sorcerer. Second, because the idea of focusing my attention on sleeping instead of on awakening was contrary to everything that I had learned in my philosophical search.

Both these considerations very quickly made me avoid dreaming, without ever accepting it as an authentic and reachable possibility. Whenever I listened to him talking about it, I was filled with apprehension. And I justified all this by saying to myself that such an irrational topic wasn't even worth the pain of trying to analyze it.

That afternoon he asked how my practice was going. I admitted that my prejudices had prevented me from making a serious decision and, not surprisingly, I had not obtained any positive result.

He commented:

"Maybe you just haven't been lucky. My teacher said that each human being brings his basic inclination with him at birth. Not

everybody can be a good dreamer, some find stalking easier. The important thing is that you insist."

But his words didn't console me. I began explaining to him that my incredulity seemed to be the result of some mental block, implanted in my earliest childhood.

He didn't allow me to finish. Making an imperative gesture with his hand, he replied:

"You have not done enough. If you promise yourself that you will not eat, or pronounce a single word, until you dream, you will see what happens! Something in your interior becomes soft, the dialogue gives in and... kaboom!

"Keep in mind that, for you, dreaming is not just an option, it's something basic. If you don't accomplish it, you cannot continue on the path."

Alarmed by his words, I asked:

"But what do I have to do to achieve it?"

"You must want to do it!" he answered. "It is as simple as that. You are exaggerating the difficulty of this exercise. Dreaming is open to everybody, because to start, it barely requires the minimum of deliberation that is necessary to learn how to type or to drive a car."

I commented that it was very difficult for me to understand how the handling of dreams could take us to internal awakening.

He observed:

"You are confused by the words. When sorcerers speak of dreaming and awakening, the terms don't have anything to do with the physical states you know. I don't have any choice but to use your language, because otherwise you would not understand me at all. But if you don't do your part, and put aside everyday meanings

and try to penetrate the meaning of what I'm telling you, you will never get out of this state of mistrust.

"I can only guarantee you that, once you discard the laziness that prevents you from facing the challenge, and attack dreaming directly and without hesitations, your mental mess will clear up by itself."

I apologized for my stubbornness and asked him to elucidate the meaning of dreaming once more.

Instead of getting involved in a theoretical explanation, which was what I wanted, Carlos gave me an illustration.

"Imagine a confirmed believer, one of those who cannot do anything without requesting permission from his god beforehand. Once he falls asleep, what happens with his convictions, where do they go?"

I didn't know what to answer. He

continued:

"They turn off, like the flame of a candle in the wind. When you dream, you are not the owner of yourself. Your visions are isolated bubbles, without connections to each other and without memory of the self. Of course, the force of habit will almost always take you to dreams where you are yourself, but you might be brave or a coward, young or old, man or woman. Truly, you are only an assemblage point which moves at random, nothing personal.

"For the ordinary man, the difference between being awake and dreaming is that in the first state his attention flows with continuity, and in the second it flows in a disordered manner; but in both experiences, the degree of participation from the will is minimal. A person will wake up in the place where, as always, he puts on his personality like a shirt and goes out to fulfill his routine tasks. Upon falling asleep, gets disconnected again, because he doesn't know he can do something else.

"The everyday wakefulness doesn't leave us room to stop and wonder if this world that we are perceiving now is as real as it seems. And the same thing must be said of any ordinary dream; while it lasts, we accept it as an unquestionable fact, we never judge it; or, to put it in more practical terms, we never intend to remember, while inside the dream, some command or agreement made while awake.

"But there is another way of directing attention, and the result of that can neither be called 'dreaming' nor 'awake', because it starts from a deliberate use of intent. What happens there is that we take charge of our awareness, and it is the same whether we are sleeping or awake, because it is something that transcends both states. That is the true awakening, to take charge of our attention!

"The Toltec teachings emphasize dreaming. It doesn't matter how it is described, the result is that the perceptive chaos of an ordinary dream is transformed into a practical space, where we can act intelligently."

"A practical space?"

"That's right. A dreamer can remember himself under any circumstance. He always has a password on hand, a pact he has made with his will, which lets him align with the warrior's intent in a microsecond. He can sustain the vision of his dream, whatever it may be, and return to it as many times as he wants, to explore and analyze it. And better still, within that vision, he can meet other warriors; that is what sorcerers call 'stalking in dreaming'.

"This technique allows us to intend objectives and pursue actions, just as we do in the daily world. We can solve problems and learn things. What you learn there is coherent; it works. Maybe you cannot explain how you received that knowledge, but you won't forget it."

I asked him what kind of knowledge he was talking about. He

answered:

"Life is learned by living it. The same happens in dreams, but there we learn how to dream. But those on the path sometimes hit upon other abilities. Don Juan, for example, used to use his dreaming body to look for hidden treasures, buried things from the war. The products of those operations were invested in various things, like petroleum, plantations of tobacco..."

My face must have shown the mixture of astonishment and incredulity I felt, because he exclaimed:

"It is not so extraordinary! We can all carry out similar feats; it is not even difficult to understand how it happens! Imagine somebody teaches you a new language while you sleep; the result is that you learn that language and you can remember it when you wake up. In the same way, if you witness something in that state, like a lost object or an event that is happening somewhere else, you can go and verify it later; if it is just as you dreamt it, then it was a dream.

"Learning in dreaming is a resource much used by sorcerers. I learned much about plants in that way and I still remember all of it.

"Don't underestimate your resources. Everything the spirit has put inside us has a transcendent meaning. It means dreams are there to be used; if it were not so, they would not exist. The techniques I have described to you are not speculations; I have personally checked them out. The art of dreaming is my message to people, but nobody pays any attention!"

When I heard the sad tone of this last observation, I was suddenly struck by the unbearable timidity of my imagination. For years and years, without fail, he had encouraged us to expand our vision, not out of any selfish concern on his part, but for the sheer pleasure of transmitting to us his superior state of awareness. And here I was, wallowing in my second-hand beliefs and my habitual doubts!

I wanted to be on his side in the world. I got up from the bench with the intention of shaking his hand to show my gratitude. I was about to promise him something, but he stopped me.

"Better don't say anything, don't waste your time! Maybe it's not your destiny to be a brilliant flying warrior, but you don't have any excuses. Like everyone, you too are splendidly equipped for dreaming. If you don't get it, it is because you don't want to."

The Door Of Perception

In another of his conversations, he explained that any state of awareness that involves an unusual position of the assemblage point is technically a dream. He said that the advantage of dreams over everyday states of attention, is that they allow us to cover a wider sensory spectrum, and to better synthesize the information we receive. In other words, we learn how to live with more intensity. The result: Greater clarity in our perceptual processes.

"Above all," he said, "dreaming gives us access to critical events in our past, such as our birth and early childhood, and it illuminates traumatic situations and altered states of awareness in our past. A sorcerer cannot leave aside his most harrowing experiences!"

Towards the end of his lecture he gave a definition that I considered very important, because he touched on what I felt was a sensitive topic. He said:

"Dreaming is not something impossible, it is just a kind of deep meditation."

For years, I had been doing some spiritual exercises called

'meditation'. These practices were quite different from what Carlos was proposing, both regarding their form and their results. As soon as I had an opportunity, I asked him to clarify the distinctions between the concept of dreaming, and meditation.

He answered: "What you're asking is difficult, because there is no way of meditating without dreaming, both terms describe the same phenomenon."

"Then why haven't my exercises produced any of the things you talk about?"

"You had better answer that yourself. In my opinion, what you have practiced up to now has not been meditation, but some kind of autosuggestion. It is common for people to confuse both things that, for a sorcerer, are not the same.

"Pacifying the mind is not meditation, but drowsiness. On the other hand, dreaming is something dynamic; it is the consequence of a process of sustained concentration, which implies a veritable battle against our lack of attention. If it were just the result of a dulling of the senses, practitioners would not call themselves

'warriors'.

"A dreamer can be the very incarnation of ferocity or seem profoundly calm, but none of that has any real importance, because he does not identify himself with his mental states. He knows that any definite sensation is nothing but a fixation of the assemblage point.

"Dreaming happens when we achieve a certain balance in our daily life, and only after silencing the internal dialogue. The term

'dreaming' is not the most appropriate to describe an exercise of awareness which has nothing to do with the content of the mind. I use it out of respect for the tradition of my lineage, but the ancient seers called it something else.

"Expert sorcerers dream, starting from their state of vigil as easily as from sleeping, because for them it is not about to close the eyes and snore, but to witness other worlds which are out there.

"From the point of view of the will, what distinguishes a dream from the daytime vigil of a sorcerer, is that the energy body obeys other laws, he can carry out incredible feats like passing through a wall or moving to the ends of the universe in the blink of an eye. Such experiences are complete and accumulative, and only somebody who has not lived them himself would cling to logical categories to explain them.

"But that kind of manifestations, however valuable, are not the objective of dreaming. To dream is essential for you, because access to the nagal happens almost exclusively in that state."

I asked him why this was so. He

answered:

"The reason is evident. People who have a natural tendency to dream, and a surplus of energy, qualify to find other, more advanced dreamers, either accidentally or because they

deliberately look for them. Occasionally, these traveling companions accept to take charge of instructing them more deeply in the art. Once an apprentice begins to shine, it is inevitable that he will attract the attention of a nagual.

"Naguals are like Eagles, constantly stalking. As soon as they detect an increment of awareness, they swoop in, because a voluntary dreamer is a rarity. For a teacher, it is much easier to stimulate an effort that has already begun, than creating one from nothing."

Carlos told me that he maintained contact with many warriors from various parts of the world through dreaming.

He went on to say that another reason why dreaming is a door to knowledge, is that its practice allows you to resolve a thousand problems derived from learning, like the lack of clarity and attention in a beginner, his mistrust regarding his instructor's activities, and the intrinsic danger of some of the techniques.

"This art softens the obsessive nature of the emanations of the Eagle, which could otherwise destroy the psychological balance and the will of an apprentice."

"Then," I asked him, "what can those of us who don't dream do, in order to gain access to these teachings?"

He seemed bothered by my question. He grunted:

"You have the wrong focus! The true question would be: What should I do to dream?"

"A warrior cannot walk around in the world leaving loose ends with every step. If you genuinely cannot consider your dreams a part of your life; if you cannot visualize them as what they are - avenues to power -; if you do not even understand what they are or what purpose they serve; well, then you have a lot of work before you."

The Dreaming Double

"Within our sphere of perception, there is a force separated from what we call 'oneself, which is detectable through dreaming. That force can be made aware of itself, absorbing the principles of our personality, and behaving with independence. The sensation that dealing with it produces in us is unspeakable, because it is an inorganic being."

"Inorganic?"

"Of course! We call our everyday attention 'organic' because it depends on a body made up of organs, right?"

I agreed.

"Then what would you call the body with which you perceive and act when you dream?"

"I would say that it is an apparition," I answered cautiously.

"I agree! It is an inorganic being; it has appearance, but no mass. For you, it is only a mental projection. However, from that being's point of view, it is our physical body that lives in an

imaginary world. If you had the energy and the necessary concentration to become aware of your other self, and you asked that being what it thinks of your everyday world, he would answer that he considers it quite unreal, almost a myth. And, you know what? It would be right!

"Our dreaming body has many uses. It can move in no time to whatever place you want and discover things. It can even be materialized, creating a visual double, something that other people can see, whether they are sleeping or awake. However, it continues being a mere appearance, it does not have any bodily functions. A human being sees it as person, but an animal would see it differently."

I interrupted him:

"How do you know all that?"

"It is so simple! I verify it permanently, because my dreaming double receives all my attention. When I want to know something from it or about the world where it moves, I ask it and it tells me. You can also do it; it is not that difficult. You can contact your energy this very night, as soon as you fall asleep."

"How?"

"There are many ways. For example, look for a mirror in your dreams, lean towards it and look yourself in the eyes; you'll see what a surprise awaits you!"

I had read something about the double in his books, but my prejudices prevented me from approaching that matter with an open mind, and in my mind there was a great confusion about concepts like the 'luminous egg' or magnetic field that surrounds living beings, the 'energy body', and the 'dreaming double'. I asked him if they were the same thing or if there was some difference between them.

He was surprised by my question.

"But haven't you understood anything? We are speaking of awareness, not of physical objects. Those entities, even the perceptive unit we call 'the physical body', are descriptions of the same thing, because there are not two of you. You are you! You don't 'have' an energy body, you are energy, you are an assemblage point that assembles emanations; and you are only one! You can have various dreams and have a different appearance in each one, either human, animal, or inorganic, or you can even dream that you are several people at the same time, but you cannot fragment your being aware."

He told me that confusing the description of our various vehicles of awareness with our sense of being is common, particularly for people who have a robust and intellectual internal dialogue.

"Once I went to see an oriental teacher, and our conversation relapsed into dreaming. The man called himself an expert, he showed off to me: 'I have seven dreaming bodies!' Overwhelmed by this revelation, I didn't know what to answer. I admitted: 'Don Juan only taught me one!'"

When he said this, Carlos pulled his head down between his shoulders, as if he was very shy, but was hiding a cynical giggle.

I asked:

"So when you speak of the dreaming double and of the energy body, you are talking about the same thing?"

"Practically. The first one can be reached through dreaming and the second by means of stalking. Or put in another way, the energy body is the dreaming double with voluntary control on the part of the dreamer; but both are one and the same thing. The difference lies in the way one reaches it.

"The ancient sorcerers molded their dreaming by the power of their will, and tried to reproduce the physical body down to the smallest detail. Calling it a 'double' stems from that tradition. The idea makes practical sense, since we are so accustomed to see ourselves in a certain way and only that way. In the beginning, it is very comfortable for the dreamer to consider himself in physical terms. But the new seers say that taking this intent to its furthest consequences is a useless waste, because it forces us to dedicate huge quantities of attention to details that will never have any practical use. They have learned to see ourselves as what we really are, bubbles of light."

I asked him if, in the classic nagualism of prehispanic people, sorcerers' ability to become animals consisted of trying to see themselves with animal bodies.

He looked at me as if saying: "Elementary!"

"Dreaming is the deliberate use of the energy body. Energy is plastic, and if you apply a constant pressure to it, it will eventually adopt the form you want. The double is the nagual, the 'other', the stamp of nagualism. When you control it, you are on the road to become whatever you want, from a free being to a beast.

"Of course, to achieve something so specialized as becoming an animal can't just be improvised, there are procedures. The double is managed through the fixation of the assemblage point in new positions. Such a fixation has an obsessive nature, and it should be evoked with sorcerers' methods. For example, if your yearning is to be a hawk and you attempt it with inflexibility, you will end up becoming one! Each one of us will achieve what we look for. That is the trick of the nagual, to manage his obsessions.

"However, you should know that people who focus on objectives that are not exclusively those of freedom and sobriety, become blocked, which can take them to madness, or to the most crass ordinariness. Truly, that is what we all do: We choose to be men, and we are! Any obsession not properly managed means slavery.

"The problem with many naguals of modern Mexico is that they have forgotten the abstract possibilities. There are sorcerers who prefer to become turkeys, and they don't come out of there. What's more, many don't have any idea that they can do something more with their energy than pursue strong sensations and scare others.

"That decadence of the teachings is what moved seers of Don Juan's lineage to attempt freedom in the most impersonal way possible, abandoning all the capricious positions of the

assemblage point which they had inherited from their ancestors. The purpose of freedom is absolutely clean and displaces all others. By attempting it, new seers have restored the purity of nagualism."

I asked him about the enormous effort which is undoubtedly required, in order to prepare a double in the environment of dreaming.

He answered:

"For most sorcerers, that effort is the other option, the door to another realm of awareness, an awareness which will allow them, at the proper moment, to intend the definitive step into the third attention. By providing autonomy and purpose to their double, they are preparing to remain conscious after death. When that body is complete and the moment arrives, their awareness abandons the human shell for good, the physical body withers and dies, but the sense of being continues."

Teaching The Art Of Stalking

Little by little, Carlos' stories had had their effect on me. One day, I sat down to seriously consider the amount of effort I invested in sustaining my self-importance. Not in the coarse and common forms it usually shows itself, like self-sufficiency, or whining for attention, but in its more subtle aspects, linked to fundamental ideas that I had about the world.

These reflections didn't bring me any certainty. On the contrary, I began to notice how the enormity of the ideological framework in which I lived, and which I had always taken for granted, trembled. When I told Carlos this, he saw it as something quite natural.

"You are learning how to stalk yourself," he told me. "It is what you should have done ever since you learnt to use your reason."

I had already read about the art of stalking, a hunting strategy which consists of using your prey's own habits and routines to catch it. We can apply this strategy to ordinary life, for example, to business. But we can also project it against our internal demons, like doubt, laziness, and self-indulgence.

Taking advantage of this opportunity - we had some free time before his lecture began - I asked him to tell me more about this.

But, to my complete astonishment, he told me that he could not do it as long as I wasn't committed to the point of death to the teachings.

"Why?"

"Because you would wind up turning against me. Learning about dreaming doesn't offend anyone, the worst you can do is not

believe that such a thing is possible. Stalking, on the other hand, the way sorcerers practice it, is very offensive to reason. Many warriors avoid speaking about it, because they don't have the stomach for it. In the initial phase, the apprentice is under crossfire and is very frustrated, not able to let go of his ego.

"Like a coin, stalking has two faces. On the one hand, it is the easiest thing in the world; on the other, it is a very difficult technique, not because it's complex, but because it deals with aspects of oneself that people usually don't want to deal with.

"Stalking induces minuscule, but very solid movements of the assemblage point; not like dreaming, which moves you deeply, but bounces you like a rubber ball and returns you immediately to what you were. When you look around, you see everything the same way as you always did, so you will continue to use your everyday approach to things. If, in this situation, you are forced to make some change by your instructor, I'll bet you anything that you will leave offended, or wounded in your pride, and quit the teaching."

I asked him how, then, sorcerers taught this art.

He answered that, traditionally, it is taught in state of heightened awareness, and it is left until the end.

"It is not something that's openly talked about, one must read between the lines. This part of the knowledge belongs to the teachings for the left side. It takes many years to remember what it is all about, and many more to become able to practice it.

"On the level where you are now, the only thing that allows you to handle stalking is to approach it with dreaming methods. If at any point you should feel that I am touching on topics that are too personal, or you have an attack of suspicions, look at your hands or use any other reminder you have chosen. The dreaming attention will help you break your fixation."

The Mark Of The Nagual

In spite of his reticence, on another occasion Carlos himself accepted answering my questions on the topic of stalking, as long as we kept to theoretical considerations.

Taking advantage of his goodwill, I asked him to explain the practical uses of the art of stalking.

He explained:

"Stalking is the central activity of an energy tracker. Although it can be applied with astonishing results to our dealings with people, it is designed mainly to tune the practitioner. Manipulating and controlling others is an arduous task, but it is incomparably more difficult to control ourselves. For that reason, stalking is the technique that distinguishes the nagual.

"Stalking can be defined as the ability to fix the assemblage point in new positions.

"The warrior who is stalking is a hunter. But, as opposed to an ordinary hunter who has his mind set on his material interests, the warrior pursues a bigger prey: His self-importance. That prepares him to face the challenge of dealing with his fellow men -something that dreaming by itself cannot resolve. Sorcerers who don't learn how to stalk, turn into grumpy people."

"Why?"

"Because they don't have the patience to tolerate people's stupidity.

"Stalking is natural to us, due to a characteristic of our animal heritage: To survive, we have all developed habits of behavior which mold our energy and help us adapt. By studying those routines, an attentive observer can accurately predict the behavior of an animal or a human being at any given moment.

"Warriors know that any habit is an addiction. It can tie you to the consumption of drugs, or going to church every Sunday; the difference is in form, not in essence. In the same way, when we get used to thinking that the world is reasonable or that the things we believe in are the only reality, we are victims of a habit which clouds our senses, and makes us see only what's familiar to us.

"Routines are templates of behavior, which we mechanically follow even when they don't make sense anymore. To be a stalker, you must have freed yourself from these imperatives of survival.

"Because he is the owner of his decisions, a warrior stalker is a person who has banished from his life all vestiges of addiction. He only has to recover his energetic integrity to be free. And since he has freedom of choice, he can be involved in calculated forms of behavior, either to deal with people or with other conscious entities.

"The result of this maneuver is not a routine participation, but stalking, because it consists of studying the behaviors of others."

"What is the sense of all this?"

He answered:

"From your point of view, none. Freedom doesn't obey reasons. However, your entire being shakes when you break your routines, because it exposes the myth of immortality."

Pointing at people returning from work, he told me:

"What do you believe they went out to do? These people went out to live their last day! The sad thing is that probably very few of them know it. Every day is unique, and the world is not the way everyone has told us it is. To cancel the force of habit is a decision

that you make once and for all. Starting from that act, a warrior becomes a stalker."

"And couldn't it happen that the warrior may end up making of his purpose something ordinary"

"No. This is something that you have to understand, because otherwise your search for impeccability will lose its freshness and you will end up betraying it. To break routines is not the purpose of the path; it is only one of its means. The goal is to be aware. Keeping that in mind, another definition of stalking is 'an unbending attention on a total result'.

"That kind of attention applied to an animal results in a hunting piece. If we apply it to another person, it produces a client, a pupil, or a romantic relationship. And applied to an inorganic being, it provides what sorcerers call 'an ally'. But only if we apply stalking to

ourselves, can it be considered a Toltec art, because it produces something precious: Awareness."

Stalking The Petty Tyrant

In spite of his explanations, the practical dimension of stalking continued, from my point of view, to be one of the darkest themes in the teachings. Over the years, I accomplished some of the other exercises, like recapitulation and inner silence; I even dreamt. But when I tried stalking, I only got ambiguous results, or wound up feeling ridiculous. ;

Apparently, Carlos was aware of my efforts, because at one point he called me, and told me:

"Don't get complicated. You are making a caricature of the teachings. If you want to stalk, observe yourself. We are all excellent hunters, stalking is our natural gift. When hunger presses us, we sharpen ourselves; children cry and achieve what they want; women entrap men and men get even with each other, swindling in business. Stalking is to be able to get away with what you want.

"If you become aware of the world you live in, you will understand that simply staying attentive to it is a kind of stalking. Since we learned to do that long before our capacity to discriminate was developed, we feel it as something perfectly natural and hardly ever question it. But all our actions, even the most altruistic, are imbued with the hunter's spirit.

"Ordinary man doesn't know he is stalking, because his character has been subjugated by socialization. He is convinced that his existence is important, so his actions are at the service of his self-importance, not the expansion of his awareness."

He added that one of the characteristics of self-importance is that it betrays us.

"Important people don't flow, they give themselves airs, show off their attributes, and lack the necessary grace and the speed to hide.

Their luminosity is too rigid, and can only achieve flexibility when they no longer have anything to defend.

"The method of sorcerers consists on focusing on the reality in which we live, but in a new way. Rather than just accumulating information, what they seek is to compact their energy. A warrior is someone who has learned to stalk himself, and is no longer burdened with a heavy image to present to others. Nobody can detect him if he doesn't want them to, because he doesn't have attachments. He is above the hunter, because he has learned to laugh at himself."

He told me how his instructor Dona Florinda Matus taught him to be inconspicuous.

"Just at the time when my books transformed me into a rich man, she sent me to fry hamburgers in a highway restaurant! For years, I worked with my money in plain sight, without being able to spend it. She said that would teach me not to lose the appropriate perspective. And I learned my lesson!

"Some time after that, I was given another opportunity to be invisible. I had taken some cactuses to the house of a friend and began to plant them. Suddenly, two reporters from The Times, who had spent a long time trying to find me, appeared. They figured I was a peon and

asked for the owner of the house. 'Knock there', I told them, and pointed at the door. My friend answered their questions: 'No, I haven't seen him', and the reporters left, wondering where the hell Castaneda could be."

He went on saying that since the problem of self-importance is a personal matter, each warrior should adapt the teachings to his own conditions. Therefore, the stalking techniques are extremely flexible. But the training is the same for everyone, and concerns getting rid of superfluous routines and acquiring enough discipline to recognize the signs of intent. Both achievements constitute true feats of character.

"The best way of acquiring that degree of discipline is to deal actively with a petty tyrant."

In response to my queries, he explained that a petty tyrant is somebody who makes our life impossible. In past times, this kind of people could hurt us physically or even kill us; nowadays, that kind of petty tyrants practically don't exist. However, due to the high level of importance that we grant ourselves, anyone in a position of bothering us works as a petty tyrant. Far from avoiding it, we should face, not the petty tyrant, but our own stupidity.

"The petty tyrant is necessary because most of us are too lazy to change by ourselves. He moves the fixation of 'me', making our weaknesses appear. He makes us see the truth - that we are not important - and he is willing to demonstrate it with actions. To learn how to treat him is the only really effective way to refine stalking.

"A petty tyrant is so important for the task that it can become an obsession for an apprentice to look for one and get in touch with him. A sincere gratitude is the only appropriate feeling for a warrior who has found one to fit his measure.

"Petty tyrants are plentiful, what is not plentiful is the guts to look for them, establish a connection with them by means of stalking, and cause their anger, putting oneself within their reach and, at the same time, scheming devastating strategies. Instead, we spend our life running away from situations that produce pain, irritation, fear, or confusion. In that way, we lose one of the most valuable tools that spirit has put in our path."

"What is the strategy to confront that kind of enemies?"

"Above all, don't see them as enemies; they are involuntary allies in your own cause. Don't lose sight of the fact that the battle is not fought for the ego, but for energy. The important thing is to win, not that the other one loses. A petty tyrant doesn't know that, and that is his weakness.

"In my case, I had the privilege of dealing with several of those people, although I was never given an encounter of the exquisite quality that my teacher had."

He told me that, when his apprenticeship began, his main impediment to approaching the art of stalking was impatience. To help him, Don Juan once demanded that he establish a friendship with a certain person who lived in an old age home.

"When I met him, he turned out to be an annoying old man who was in the habit of telling everyone how in his youth, in the 1920s, he had been witness to a spectacular event. He was sitting in an Italian coffee shop. Suddenly, a car stopped in front of the door, and out came

several people armed with machine guns, and they began to shoot towards the establishment. Thanks to his lucky star, my friend could hide under some tables and was unhurt.

"The anecdote apparently constituted the only treasure in this old man's life. Unfortunately for us who knew him, the old man suffered from amnesia and was always forgetting whom he had told it to. I had to suffer through it again and again for years. Every time I arrived at the retirement home, he would invariably cling to my arm and wonder: 'Did I ever tell you how I was attacked by some gangsters?'

"I felt pity for him, because somehow he made me think of my own uncertain future. But at the end I had enough; I returned to Don Juan and told him: 'I can't stand this old man anymore! He is really infuriating! What is the point of making me visit him?'

"But Don Juan was inflexible; he ordered that, starting from that day, I had to go visit the old man every day, or give up my apprenticeship.

"Alarmed by this threat, I gathered all my patience and tried to complete the task. Sometimes I fantasized, thinking of the possibility that the old man was not the person he seemed to be. That gave me encouragement to continue with my task. One day,

when I arrived at the retirement home and asked for my friend, they informed me that he had died."

Perceptual Homogenization

That afternoon, Carlos was talking to us about certain characteristics of perception. He told us that human beings have inherited from the dinosaurs the trait of seeing the sky as a blue color. On the other hand, he claimed that our relatives, the primates, see it as a yellow color.

Answering a question from someone, he described the world in which we live as 'a conglomerate of interpretation units.'

Understanding that this definition was an obscure one for his listeners, he explained:

"Man belongs to the primate group . His great fortune is that he can achieve unique expressions of awareness due to his capacity for attention and analysis. However, pure perception is always interfered with by the way we interpret. Therefore, our reality molds itself to our description.

"The goal of sorcerers is to perceive all that is humanly possible. Since we cannot escape our biological condition, let us be sublime monkeys!"

"To perfect our understanding", he added, "the path of attention is all we've got."

That same night I had an opportunity to talk with him, and I asked him to break his statements into smaller pieces for me.

He said that due to our biological condition, we all work as units of perception. And it is possible for us to make 'a miracle of attention: Perceptual homogenization'.

"What does 'units of perception' mean?" I asked.

"It means that, since we are autonomous beings, our perception could also be autonomous. But it is not, because by coming to an agreement with our fellow men, we all perceive the same thing. That extraordinary ability, which began as a voluntary consent aimed at survival, has ended up tying us to our own descriptions"

He affirmed that the flow of the Eagle's emanations is continually new and disconcerting, but we don't see it because we live three steps removed from the real world: Our innate sensitivity, our biological interpretation, and our social agreement.

Those steps do not happen simultaneously, but their speed is superior to anything we can consciously determine; because of that, we take for a fact the world we perceive.

I asked him to give an example .

He answered:

"Imagine that at this moment you witness a group of the Eagle's emanations. Automatically, you transform it into something sensorial, with characteristics like brightness, sound, movement, etc. Then memory intervenes, which is under the obligation to give everything meaning, and you recognize it, for example, as another person. Lastly, your social inventory classifies it, by comparing the person with those you know; that classification allows you to identify him. Already, you are a good distance away from the real fact, which is indescribable, because it is unique.

"The same thing happens with everything we see. Our comprehension is the result of a long process of purifications or skimmings', as Don Juan called them. We skim everything, and in that way we modify the world that surrounds us to such an extent that there is very little left of the original. Although this situation helps us to live under better conditions, it also enslaves us to our own creation, and makes us predictable.

"When we homogenize our assemblage points, the only things we allow ourselves to perceive are those which do not go against our preconceived idea of the world. We are like horses who after learning a path can no longer enjoy their freedom; all they do is to repeat a pattern. That homogeneity is frightful, it is too much. Start thinking! Something is missing!"

He maintained that any preconceived idea, even something as simple as the names we give things, keeps us tied to reason, because it forces us to create mechanisms of judgement.

"For example, when you say: 'I believe in God', in fact you are saying: 'They told me certain ideas and I have chosen to adopt them; now I even kill for them'. Then you are not the one who decides! It is the other, the implanted judgement.

"The ideal thing is that you determine your life starting from your own experience. If your belief takes something away from you, beware! Everything that doesn't make you free, enslaves you.

"Being focused on a particular aspect of the human inventory has two effects: it turns us into specialists in our field, but, at the same time, it will fossilize the energy conduits, which will then only react to certain stimuli, saturating our self with ideas and opinions.

"A warrior cannot have the luxury of following people's ways, nor can he be a reactionary, because his freedom means to exercise other alternatives."

I asked him which alternatives he meant, but he gave me a pat on the shoulder and told me that it was too late.

"We will continue another day."

Predators Of Awareness

Our conversation was not resumed before several years had passed. On that occasion - one of his informal meetings - Carlos brought up an entirely new and frightening concept, which gave rise to the most passionate controversies.

"Man," he said, "is a magical being, he has the same capacity to fly into the universe as any one of the millions of awareness that exist. But, at some point in his history, he lost his freedom. Now his mind is no longer his own, it is an implant."

He claimed that human beings are hostages to a group of cosmic entities who are devoted predators, and who sorcerers call 'flyers'.

He said this had been a very secret topic among the ancient seers, but due to an omen, he had realized that the time had come to disclose it. The omen was a picture that his friend Tony, a Christian Buddhist, had taken. In it appeared the sharply outlined figure of a dark and ominous creature, floating above a multitude of the faithful gathered among the pyramids of Teotihuacan.

"My cohorts and I decided that it is time to let you know our true situation as social beings, even at the cost of all the distrust that this information may generate in the public."

When I had the opportunity, I asked him to tell me more about the flyers, and then he told me one of the most terrifying aspects of Don Juan's world: That we are prisoners of beings who came from the confines of the universe, and that they use us as casually as we use chickens.

He explained:

"The portion of the universe accessible to us is the operative field of two radically different kinds of awareness. One, which includes plants and animals, and also human beings, is a whitish awareness;

it is young, a generator of energy. The other one is an infinitely older and more parasitic awareness, possessor of an immense quantity of knowledge.

"Besides men and other beings that inhabit this Earth, there is in the universe an immense range of inorganic entities. They are present among us, and occasionally they are visible. We call them ghosts or apparitions. One of those species, which seers describe as enormous, black, flying shapes, arrived here at some point from the depths of cosmos, and found an oasis of awareness in our world. They have specialized in 'milking us'."

"That is incredible!" I exclaimed.

"I know, but it is the pure and terrifying truth. Have you never wondered about people's energetic and emotional ups and downs? It is the predator, who shows up periodically to pick up his quota of awareness. They only leave enough so that we may continue living, and sometimes not even that."

"What do you mean?"

"Sometimes they take too much, and the person becomes gravely ill, and may even die."

I couldn't believe what I was hearing.

"Do you mean we are being eaten alive?" I asked.

He smiled.

"Well, they don't literally 'eat' us, what they do is a vibratory transfer. Awareness is energy and they can align with us. Since by nature they are always hungry, and we, on the other hand, exude light, the result of that alignment can be described as energy robbery."

"But why do they do it?"

"Because, on the cosmic plane, energy is the most powerful currency, and we all want it, and we humans are a vital race, stuffed with nourishment. Every living being eats other beings, and the most powerful always comes out the winner. Who said man is at the top of the food chain? That idea could only have come from a human being. To inorganic beings, we are the prey."

I commented that it was inconceivable to me that entities that are even more aware than us could be predatory to that extent.

He replied:

"But what do you think you're doing when you eat a lettuce or a beefsteak? You are eating life! Your sensibility is hypocritical. Cosmic predators are no more and no less cruel than we are. When a stronger race consumes another, inferior one, it is helping its energy to evolve."

"I have already told you that in the universe there is only war. The confrontations of men are a reflection of what happens out there. It is normal for one species to try to consume another; a warrior does not complain about it, and tries to survive."

"And how do they consume us?"

"Through our emotions, properly directed by the internal dialogue. They have designed our social environment in such a way that we are constantly shooting off waves of emotions, which are immediately absorbed. Best of all, they like attacks of ego; for them, that is an exquisite mouthful. Such emotions are the same anywhere in the universe where they occur, and they have learned how to metabolize them."

"Some consume us for our lust, anger, or fear; others prefer more delicate feelings, like love or fondness. But they are all after the same thing. Normally, they attack us around the area of the head, heart, or stomach, where we store the thickest part of our energy."

"Do they attack animals, too?"

"These creatures use everything that's available, but they prefer organized awareness. They drain animals and plants in the part of their attention that is not too fixed. They even attack other inorganic beings, but they can see them and avoid them, like we avoid mosquitoes. The only ones who are completely trapped by them are human beings."

"How is it possible that all this is happening without us realizing it?"

"Because we inherit the exchange with those beings almost like a genetic condition, and it feels natural to us. When someone is born, the mother offers it like food, without realizing it, because her mind is also controlled. Baptizing the child is like signing an agreement. Starting from there, she devotes herself to install acceptable behavior patterns; she tames the child, reduces its warring side, and transforms it into a meek sheep.

"When a boy has sufficient energy to reject that imposition, but not enough to enter the path of the warrior, he becomes a rebel, or socially maladjusted.

"The flyers' advantage stems from the difference between our levels of awareness. They are very powerful and vast entities; the idea that we have of them is equivalent to the one an ant will have of us.

"However, their presence is painful and you can measure it in various ways. For example, when they provoke us into attacks of rationality or distrust, or when we are tempted to violate our own decisions. Lunatics can detect them very easily - too easily, I would say - since they feel physically how these beings settle on their shoulders, generating paranoia. Suicide is the stamp of flyers, because the flyers' mind is potentially homicidal."

"You say that it is an exchange, but what do we gain from such plunder?"

"In exchange for our energy, the flyers have given us our mind, our attachments, and our ego. For them, we are not their slaves, but a kind of salaried workers. They bestowed these privileges on a primitive race and gave us the gift of thinking, which made us evolve; indeed, they have civilized us. If not for them, we would still be hiding in caves or making nests on treetops.

"The flyers control us through our traditions and customs. They are the masters of religion, the creators of history. We hear their voice on the radio and we read their ideas in the newspapers. They manage all our means of information, and our belief systems. Their strategy is magnificent. For example, there was an honest man who spoke of love and freedom; they have transformed it into self-pity and servility. They do it with everyone, even with naguals. For that reason, the work of a sorcerer is solitary.

"For millennia, flyers have concocted plans to collectivize us. There was a time when they became so shameless that they were even seen in public, and people made representations of them in stone. Those were dark times; they were everywhere. But now their strategy has become so intelligent that we don't even know they exist. In the past, they hooked us through our credulity, today, through our materialism. They are responsible for modern man's ambition not to have to think for himself; just observe how long somebody will tolerate silence!"

"Why the change in their strategy?"

"Because, at this time, they are running a great risk. Humanity is in very quick and constant contact, and information can reach anyone. Either they must fill our heads, bombarding us day and night with all kind of suggestions, or there will be some who will realize and warn the others."

"What would happen if we were able to repel those entities?"

"In one week, we would recover our vitality and we would be shining again. But, as normal human beings, we cannot think about that possibility, because it would imply to go against all that

is socially acceptable. Fortunately, sorcerers have one weapon: Discipline.

"The encounter with inorganic beings happens gradually. In the beginning, we don't notice them. But an apprentice begins to see them in his dreams and then while he is awake - something that can drive him crazy, if he doesn't learn how to act as a warrior. Once he understands, he can confront them.

"Sorcerers manipulate the foreign mind, turning into energy hunters. It is for that purpose my cohorts and I have designed Tensegrity exercises for the masses. They have the virtue of liberating us from the flyer's mind.

"In this sense, sorcerers are opportunists. They take advantage of the push they've been given and say to their captors: 'Thanks for everything, see you later! The agreement you made was with my ancestors, not with me'. When recapitulating their life, they are literally snatching the food out of the flyer's mouth. It is like going to the store and returning a product to the shopkeeper, demanding your money back. The inorganic beings don't like it, but they can't do anything about it.

"Our advantage is that we are dispensable, there is a lot of food around! A position of total alertness, which is nothing but discipline, creates such conditions in our attention that we don't taste good any more to those beings. In that case, they turn away and leave us in peace."

Losing The Mind

In another conversation, Carlos said that our reason is a byproduct of the foreign mind, and that we shouldn't trust it. For someone with my mental make-up, this was very difficult to accept.

When I asked him about this, he explained that what sorcerers reject is not the capacity of reason to reach conclusions, but the way it is imposed on our life as if it is the only alternative.

"Rationality makes us feel like a solid block, and we begin to grant the greatest importance to concepts like 'reality'. When we face unusual situations, like those which assault the sorcerer, we tell ourselves: 'It is not reasonable', and it seems we have said everything there is to say.

"The world of our mind is dictatorial, but fragile. After some years of continuous use, the self becomes so heavy that it is just common sense to give it a rest in order to continue ahead.

"A warrior fights to break the description of the world which has been injected into him, in order to open up a space for new things. His war is against the self. For that purpose, he tries to be permanently aware of his potential. Since the content of perception depends on the position of the assemblage point, a warrior tries with all his might to loosen the fixation of that point. Instead of creating a cult out of his speculations, he pays attention to certain premises of the path of sorcerers.

"Those premises say that, in the first place, only a high level of energy can enable one to deal adequately with the world. And second: Rationality is a consequence of the fixation of the assemblage point in the position of reason, and that point moves when we achieve internal silence. Third: In our luminous field, there are other positions every bit as pragmatic as rationality. Fourth: When we achieve a point of view which includes reason as well as its twin center, silent knowledge, concepts like truth and

lies stop being operative, and it becomes patently clear that man's true dilemma is to have energy, or not have it.

"Sorcerers reason in a different way to ordinary people. For them, to anchor attention is insanity, and to make it flow is common sense. They call the fixing of the assemblage point in non-habitual areas 'seeing'. Staying sane is imperative, but they have found out that rationality is not always sane. To stay sane is a voluntary act, while to be reasonable is just to fix our attention on an area of collective consent."

"Are sorcerers opposed to reason, then?"

"I have already told you: They are opposed to its dictatorship. They know the center of reason can take us very far. Absolute reason is merciless, it doesn't stop halfway; that's why people are afraid of it. When we are able to focus on it with inflexibility, it generates an obligation to be impeccable, because not to be so is not reasonable. To do things with impeccability is to do all that is humanly possible, and a little more. Therefore, reason also takes you to a movement of the assemblage point.

"To act within the precepts of the warrior's path, you need clarity of purpose, the courage to take on the task, and an unbending intent. If you look around, you will see that most people 'of reason' are not, in fact, located in that center, but on its periphery."

"Why?"

"Because they lack energy. Their holes prevent them from having any objectivity. Their attention always fluctuates, and because of that their perception is hybrid, it is ambiguous. They drift like a rudderless boat in the current, at the mercy of their emotions and without a clear view of either shore - the bank of pure reasoning on one side, the bank of the abstract on the other.

"What is required of a modern warrior is a condition of sustained energy gain, until his attention can flow between reason and silent knowledge. When moving in that way, he is more sane than ever,

and yet he is not a rational being. From whichever position he assumes, he will always be sighting the other side, and his vision acquires perspective and depth. Sorcerers describe this condition as 'being double' or 'losing the mind'.

"We can arrive at silent knowledge in exactly the same way as our teachers taught us to arrive at reason: By induction. It is like controlling both sides of a bridge. From one side, you can see reason like a net of agreements, which transforms collective interpretations into common sense through the customs of concern. From the other side, you can sense silent knowledge as an unfathomable, creative darkness which extends beyond the threshold of non-pity. Upon crossing this threshold, the ancient sorcerers arrived at the source of pure understanding.

"To be double is to make a connection with oneself, to flow between two points. It is something practically indescribable, but an apprentice experiences it as soon as he saves enough energy. Starting from there, he learns how to deal with reason like a free being, neither reverent nor abject. He acquires what Don Juan called 'intensity'; that is, the capacity to store information in a perceptual block."

I found the concept of 'intensity' totally obscure. I asked him to explain it further.

He answered that perception is composed of content and intensity. Extreme situations, like a sharp awareness of danger, proximity of death, or the effect of power plants, generate great intensity. A sorcerer learns how to store those experiences in the movement of the assemblage point.

He added that what is proposed by the way of knowledge is a change of values in how we understand our social interaction as a species, pulling our energy out from everyday life and concentrating it on situations which require that intensive way of living.

"It is about returning man to marvel, to power, to what he has dreamt about; to reconnect him with astonishment and the capacity to create. That rupture is the only thing which can liberate our luminosity from our perceptual uniformity."

The Movements Of The Assemblage Point

On another occasion, talking to a small group of friends, Carlos explained that another effect of the movement of the assemblage point is that things acquire new forms, the clarity of appearances gives way to a deeper and more essential clarity, and live beings adopt the form of enormous, round fields of light.

He said that the luminous configuration of a man or woman is a portrait of their existence. Seers look at each detail, and in that way they determine whether a person is prepared for apprenticeship or not.

"Most people mistreat their tonal; in consequence, their fibers fall like the pleats of an old curtain. Those 'tired' fibers work as a kind of glue, blocking the natural course of energy. Don Juan called them 'tonal bells', because they are shaped like that; they are dark and give the impression of a heavy weight. When moving, those fields slither or give brief jumps, as if they are dragging something, or as if the person has put on a bear suit too big for him.

"In warriors, on the other hand, the pleats have tension. Their cocoons are almost spherical and they overflow with vigor; the lower part is compact like a solid rubber ball and it bounces, lifting off from the ground. When they advance, these globes don't slither sorely, but rather jump with joy and sometimes drift over a long distance. Don Juan called them precisely that, 'the planers', and said it was a pleasure to bump into one of them on the street.

"But only seers are able to redesign their luminosity in such a way that they can take completely off from the Earth, and fly. Some are able to break their limits, which is perceived as if those warriors have ruptured the skin which imprisoned their energy, exposing the radiant central core. They are traveling sorcerers, and they don't depend on their physical body to be aware and to act anymore.

"The task of an apprentice is to re-center his energy body through acts of impeccability and force that lead to the movement of the assemblage point. Above all, he should achieve mobility for his energy, making it flow in a natural way. In that way, his fibers stretch out and begin to shine with an amber shade.

"Perception takes place in a point of intense white light that is generally rigidly fixed inside a very specific area, which sorcerers call 'the human band'. That point aligns emanations we receive from the outside with those which are found inside our luminous field, similar to the way an antenna picks up radio waves and transforms them into sound."

To our surprise, he assured us that to see that point is a relatively simple matter, which happens already in the early stages of the path.

"It's enough to suggest it in the appropriate way. An apprentice should never say: 'I am useless, I don't see anything', but the opposite: 'I might see it... yes, there it is!' If we repeat that intent over and over, sooner or later the assemblage point will enter into our perceptive field, and that is the first step towards moving it deliberately."

One in the group asked him how we could witness our own perception.

He explained that, since we have no way of perceiving anything if it does not pass through the assemblage point, the only way of understanding this matter is to say that the point perceives itself. Whatever we see is the result of its operation. Because of that, we have the sensation of a flame burning where our emanations join with those from the outside. He said that we might equally well describe the phenomenon in auditory terms, or as an electric crack that signals alignment.

"The important thing is to verify it for yourselves, because that will put you beyond the mind, it will fill you with silent

knowledge. The mere act of seeing it has an impact which moves the fixation of the assemblage point."

He continued by saying that an experienced sorcerer is able to displace his attention very far from the human band. This enlarges the reach of his perception considerably.

"Some go on a trip to the realm of the inorganic beings; that alignment is very gratifying for his energy, and the traveler returns home renewed. Others have an inclination to go to the lower area, the area of the beast, the most sordid corner of awareness. For human beings, that is a dangerous place, because to remain there for a long period can produce physical lesions."

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They asked him where the self stays while the assemblage point moves to the low area.

He answered:

"It seems you are thinking that the assemblage point fits inside your inventory of reasonable things, but that's not so. Don't see it as a solid object or as another part of your body. We don't have an assemblage point, we are it!

"While a warrior is imprisoned within the limits of the human form, the furthest place he can transfer his assemblage point is to an area of interpretive vacuum, which new seers call 'limbo'. That is a real space on the frontier of the other world, a transition area on the periphery of the other attention.

"These movements accumulate and serve to condense our personal power, until they finally crystallize in a kind of luminous matrix that Don Juan called 'the dreaming positions'. Through exploration of those positions, the individual experience of a sorcerer leaves the human groove and becomes practically limitless.

"The movement of the assemblage point is not just propelled by an interest in accessing astonishing visions, but is above all directed by the fact that each controlled displacement liberates enormous

quantities of energy. Ideally, the warrior applies his unbending intent and lights up his energy field as if he becomes one gigantic assemblage point, to witness everything once and for all. In that case, the point shoots out and up, the traveler becomes a blast of light, and he never recovers his form again. This is the greatest challenge, the union of our awareness with infinity."

The Survival Of The Assemblage Point

Although Carlos frequently mentioned the topic of death, he avoided talking about what happens after a person dies. This occasion seemed like a good opportunity to investigate his opinion on it.

"Carlos," I asked him, "what happens to us when we die?"

"It depends," he answered. "Death touches us all, but it is not the same for all. Everything depends on one's energy level."

He assured me that the death of an ordinary person is the end of his journey, the moment when he has to return to the Eagle all the awareness he obtained while alive.

"If we don't have anything else than our life force to offer it, we will be finished. That kind of death erases any feeling of unity."

I asked him if that was his particular opinion, or part of the traditional knowledge of seers.

He answered:

"It is not an opinion; I have been on the other side and I know. I have seen children and adults wandering over there and I have observed their efforts to remember themselves. For those who dissipated their energy, death is like a fleeting dream, filled with bubbles of steadily fading memories, and then nothing."

"Do you mean that when we dream, we approach the state of the dead?"

"We don't just approach it, we are there! But since the vitality of our body remains intact, we can return. To die is literally a dream.

"You see, when an ordinary person dreams, he is not able to focus his attention on anything; he doesn't have anything but his fragmented memories, fed with experiences he has accumulated in the course of his life. If that person dies, the difference is that his dream lengthens and he doesn't wake up again. It is the dream of death.

"The journey of death can take him to a virtual world of appearances, where he will contemplate the materialization of his beliefs, of his heavens and private hells, but nothing else. Such visions start disappearing in time, as the impulses of memory wear out."

"And what happens to the souls of those who die?"

"The soul doesn't exist, what exists is energy. Once the physical body disappears, the only thing left is an energy entity fed by memory.

"Some individuals are so oblivious of themselves that they die almost without realizing it. They are like people with amnesia, people who have a blockage of the assemblage point and can no longer align memories, they don't have any continuity; as such, they feel permanently on the brink of oblivion. When they die, those people disintegrate almost instantaneously; the impulse of their lives only lasts for a few years at the most.

"However, most people take a little longer disintegrating, between one hundred and two hundred years. The ones who had lives full of meaning can resist for half a millennium. The range expands even more for those who were able to create bonds with masses of people; they can retain their awareness during entire millennia."

"How do they achieve that?"

"Through the attention of their followers. Memory creates bonds among live beings and those who have left. That's how they stay aware. And that's why cults of historical personalities are so pernicious. That was the intent of those who, in the past, were mummified: To preserve their name in history. Ironically, it is the greatest damage that can be inflicted on energy. If you seriously want to punish a person, bury him in a lead casket; his confusion never ends.

"It doesn't matter what he does or how he has lived; an ordinary person doesn't have the smallest chance of continuing ahead. For sorcerers who live facing eternity, five years or five millennia are nothing. That's why they say that death is instantaneous disintegration."

I wanted to know if dead people can return to contact the living.

He answered:

"Relationships among residents of various spheres of awareness can only be made through the alignment of the assemblage point. Death is a final perceptive barrier. Living people can go to the realm of the dead through dreams, but that is the kind of thing a warrior won't enter into, because it only wears away his energy. Something very different, on the other hand, it is to contact sorcerers who have left."

"Why?"

"Because they were able to reach their energy double, and retained their individuality through their techniques."

"How can we enter into relationships with that kind of awareness?"

"In dreaming. However, it is very difficult for a sorcerer who has already left to fix his attention on this world, unless he has some specific task to complete, and it is even more difficult for an ordinary man to support that contact."

"Interaction with these beings is gratifying for warriors, but terrifying for others, because an inorganic sorcerer is not a ghost, but an intense source of aware and implacable energy, able to damage those who come near him through recklessness. That kind of contact can be even more dangerous than an exchange with a live sorcerer."

"What does the danger consist of?"

"It is the nature of energy. If you believe sorcerers are friendly people, you are mistaken; they are naguals!"

"There is a very morbid feature in our constitution that impels us to use any means necessary. It is something natural, we cannot avoid it. That feature is exacerbated in a sorcerer, and magnified after his departure, because there are no longer any inhibitions to counteract it. When the sorcerer becomes inorganic, he returns to what he always was: A cosmic, predatory emanation."

Cyclical Beings

Before I met Carlos, influenced by my oriental readings, I had been in favor of the doctrine of reincarnation. It seemed a logical alternative to the Christian belief in the resurrection of the body. However, in one of his conversations, he observed that the dogmas of Christianity and of the Eastern religions were suspiciously similar, because they start from a common denominator: The fear of death.

His comment threw me into a state of perplexity. It was a totally new focus on something that had always fascinated me.

When I asked his opinion, Carlos tried to deviate my interest to another topic, as if it were not worthwhile to speak of that matter. But later, changing tactics, he told me that all my beliefs about the survival of the personality were the result of social suggestions.

"They have told you that we have time, that there is a second opportunity. Lies!"

"Seers affirm that a human being is like a drop of water that separated from the ocean of life and began to shine by itself. That shine is the point of assembling perception. But, once the luminous cocoon is dissolved, individual awareness disintegrates and becomes cosmic. How could it return? For sorcerers, each life is unique, but you are hoping to repeat it?"

"Your ideas originate in the high opinion you have of your own unity. But, like everything else, you are not a solid block, you are flowing. Your 'me' is a sum of beliefs, a memory; nothing concrete!"

I asked him why religions preach their very different doctrines. He

answered:

"It is easy to understand; they are answers to the ancestral fears of human beings. Each culture generated its own explanatory propositions, but only seers were beyond beliefs, corroborating those aspects of emanations of the Eagle for themselves."

He explained that there are energy clusters in the universe, to which we are hooked like the beads of a rosary are hooked to each other. We are cyclical; we are the result of a luminous stamp, and every time a new being is born, he embodies the nature of that pattern. But the chain that unites us is not of a personal nature; it doesn't imply transfers of memory or personality, or anything like that.

"To survive death, it is necessary to be a sorcerer. By satisfying the Eagle with a living replica, sorcerers are able to keep the flame of their individual awareness burning for eternities. But that is a feat. Do you think this greatest achievement of a warrior should be a free gift?"

I commented that recent studies had demonstrated that some people, under very special circumstances, are able to remember events of a past life.

He insisted that it was an erroneous interpretation of facts.

"It is true that anyone can tune in to certain living emanations that look place in other times, and feel that he has lived not only one, but many lives. But that is only one alignment among millions of possible alignments."

The Sorcerer's Alternative

I asked him if an ordinary person has any chance of surviving death.

He answered that there is always one possibility: The way of the warrior.

"If you want to understand this, don't look at it in black and white. See it more in terms of movements of the assemblage point. The challenge of a warrior is to fix his attention, and fight to maintain the awareness of his individuality even after his departure.

"When we reach a certain threshold of perception, we see that physical death is a challenge. Just as there are two ways of living, there are two ways of dying; in both we can act as impeccable warriors - or as unconscious idiots. That difference is everything."

"Do you mean that what happens after death depends on how we prepare for it?"

Perceiving the intention of my question, he answered:

"Yes, but not in the way you want to interpret it. The idea that being good or complying with certain commandments will facilitate things is a fallacy which has been transmitted to us by the social order. The only preparation that is worthwhile is to take on the rigors of the way of the warrior, which teaches us how to save energy and be impeccable.

"Since there are two forms of living and dying, there are also two kinds of people: those who feel immortal, and those who are already dead. The first ones harbor hopes, the last ones do not. A warrior is somebody who knows that his time is already up, but still continues to fight, because that is his nature. If you look into his eyes, you will find emptiness."

"But then what is the sorcerer's alternative really about?"

"There is only one way for a man to be ahead of his own end: Through managing his energy. That work consists of dreaming, stalking and recapitulation. These three techniques together give one result: The completion of the energy body.

"In a general sense, the duration of our existence depends in great measure on how we treat our energy. We leave this life filled to the brim with everyday concerns, we are eroded by the things we see and touch, and for that reason we die. But if we call back to ourselves all that vital force through recapitulation, death can no longer be the same, because we will have our totality.

"From the seers' point of view, a warrior who has recapitulated his life does not die. His attention is so compact that it is one continuous and coherent line; it is not dispersed. His recapitulation never ends, it continues for eternity, because it is the work of retracing his steps, of existing on his own and being complete.

"Just like we need a certain quantity of experience to function as individuals, a sorcerer requires sufficient practice in the second attention to be a true sorcerer; otherwise, he won't be prepared when the time comes, and he will depart into infinity as an incomplete sorcerer. Nevertheless, a warrior who struggled all his life to reach the parameters of impeccability does have a second chance. He can gather the events of his existence, and pick up the scattered energy in order to pass into the world of the nagual."

I asked him what a sorcerer does in that world.

He answered:

"For most people, to die is to speechlessly enter something very unfamiliar, much like what we experience in ordinary dreams. There, nothing has a linear sequence, and the concepts of time, space, and gravity do not apply. Imagine what a warrior with the control of his dreaming double can do on a journey of that nature! No doubt you can see that this is a great feat of awareness.

"A sorcerer is somebody who spends his life tuning himself through arduous discipline. When his time arrives, he faces death like a new stage in his travel along the path. Unlike to an ordinary man, he doesn't try to soothe his fear with false hopes.

"The warrior departs for his definitive journey filled with joy, and his death greets him and allows him to keep his individuality like a trophy. His sense of being is so finely tuned that he becomes pure energy, and disappears with the fire from within. In that way, he is able to extend his individuality for thousands of millions of years."

"Thousands of millions?"

"That's it. We are children of the Earth, it is our ultimate source. The option of sorcerers is to unite with the awareness of the Earth, for as long as the Earth will live."

The Final Choice

That afternoon, he was limping when he came to the meeting. We asked him what had happened, and he told us that while he was at the hotel, for one fraction of second a toe on his left foot lit up and was scorched with an internal fire.

"I had to move quickly, because my assemblage point had begun the process of alignment!"

Moved by his strange experience, he talked for a long time about the final exercise of sorcerers, by means of which they catch fire from inside and enter pure awareness in their totality, shoes and all.

One of the people in the room asked him why, if the passing into awareness is the final objective of sorcerers, he had fought to retain his individual self today, instead of taking advantage of the opportunity.

With a roguish smile, Carlos told us that the question made him remember one of his ancestors, a Portuguese, who devoted himself to the business of transporting people to Brazil, with the story of the promised land. The man made a small fortune that way, and he did a great job creating propaganda about the advantages of Brazil, but he had never been there.

"And here I am, transporting you!"

After we had laughed at his anecdote, Carlos changed the expression on his face. In a very formal tone, he explained that warriors don't act for reasons of self-importance, and therefore, their decisions are not theirs.

"Don Juan told me how some men of knowledge, after a life of impeccable fight, decide to remain, while others dissolve like a puff of wind into infinity.

"The thing that makes some warriors fight to retain their self, is something unrelated to personal concerns. To belong to a lineage of power implies bonds of such a deep nature that our personality is annulled. It becomes just a minuscule detail in an energy structure that the new seers call 'the Rule'.

"In that situation, individual choice no longer exists for the warrior, properly speaking. All he can do is accept his destiny and fulfill the commands of the Rule; anything else would just lead to his extinction."

The Seers Of Ancient Mexico

In the beginning, one of my worries had to do with Carlos' historical sources. To what extent were Don Juan's teachings the product of a tradition of men of knowledge which stretched back thousands of years, and to what extent had they been influenced by Western ideas?

On various occasions, I tried to validate what Carlos told us through comparisons with what has been left to us from prehispanic antiquity, but I must admit that I always ended up frustrated. I wanted to question it in terms of the most orthodox anthropology. However, it

seemed inappropriate to approach this delicate matter in front of people, so I postponed my questions.

One afternoon, I mentioned what was on my mind. He was perfectly affable, and told me that this was a doubt that assaulted almost all his listeners, because we have all been presented with the image of the communities of ancient Mexico as primitive towns.

He added that my mistrust regarding his statements was normal, and that the problem I was presenting in such a straightforward way, was actually about finding definitions for experiences which don't fit within the syntax of modern languages.

"I made a similar error with my teacher. For Don Juan, anything that didn't serve the objective of the teachings was a waste of time. Every time I tried to find some relationship between his words and those I read in history books, he simply stopped speaking and turned away.

"Once I asked him about his reticence and he answered: 'Behind your professional concern hides a professional doubt. If you don't

discard it, you won't understand the core of what I am telling you. I know the sources of the information which I am passing on to you, so I don't need to prove them '.

"Later, he spoke about a time in which sorcerers traveled enormous distances across the world, in order to share the results of their spiritual search with colleagues on other latitudes. Unlike today, sorcerers moved in dreaming with complete freedom, and nothing was more respected than being a seer.

"The credit for the knowledge those men accumulated cannot be awarded to any one country in particular, the knowledge is universal. But the organization of their principles into the arrangement which today is called 'nagualism' or 'the path of the warrior' definitely took place in ancient Mexico.

"Starting from their primary observations, the ancient seers arrived at the most profound understanding of universal truths that man has ever achieved. The power of their attention had so much force that it is still active today, generating potentialities which are affecting certain areas of Mexico and the Southern United States, creating favorable conditions for an energy concentration that you'd be hard put to find anywhere else in the world.

"Partly, those sorcerers were helped by a peculiar configuration of the luminous field of the Earth, whose epicenter rotates around the Valley of Mexico. They see that peculiarity as a gigantic funnel or pleat of light, where emanations coming in from the universe fit with those of the planet, producing a heightened level of awareness.

"Don Juan thought that the formation is natural and was used to maximum advantage by the seers to increase their power. But in my analysis of the matter, I have come to the conclusion that it is the other way around: The seers of antiquity fixed their attention on this area of the world, and the planet in its entirety responded to that intent, creating a gigantic catalyst of cosmic emanations. However we choose to interpret it, the fact remains: This is the center; anything can happen here!"

A Journey To The Roots

While we were contemplating the ruins of what in the past was the main temple of the Aztecs, Carlos surprised me by making an extravagant declaration. He told me that in this very place, located in the heart of the capital's main square, resided the protector of Mexico, whom he described as an inorganic being in the shape of a tube of light, the size of a twenty-story building.

I looked at him, trying to figure out if he was joking, but his eyes were totally serious. From there, the conversation shifted to a topic of great interest to me: The enigma of prehispanic cultures.

He affirmed that while we nowadays use books to transmit knowledge, the ancient sorcerers kept it in positions of the assemblage point. And they used their sculptures of stone, wood, and ceramics as catalysts for the movement of that point. So their knowledge took the form of magnificent works of art, because for them knowledge was not only information, but, above all, a sublime vision of life.

"The power of that vision has lasted until the present. All the naguals I am aware of were Toltecs, that is, accomplished artists. They combined impeccable control of their emotions with a high aesthetic sensibility provided by their experiments with awareness. The result was an unheard-of capacity to communicate sensations, and make sense of extreme experiences that would have entangled other men to the point where they could just babble incoherently.

"Some naguals of my lineage were attracted to the plastic arts, others to theater, music, or dance. There were some whose predilection was tales of power; stories which are able to unleash the same effects on all their listeners, because they are not based on the cleverness of reason, but on the marvels of our being aware. Today we call those stories 'myths', and of course, we don't understand them."

Carlos went on to say that, judging from their artistic expression, the obsession of the sorcerers of ancient Mexico with transmitting their knowledge to those who surrounded them has no parallel anywhere else on Earth. The agreement they made with their pupils had different parameters from our Western, 'rational' agreements. The prehispanic reality included aspects we would not consider normal, because they had to do with energy fields that are not in use anymore.

As an example of one of those fields, he mentioned the emphasis on dreaming, which was of consuming interest to prehispanic people. Remnants of it can still be found today in isolated tribes in the country.

He concluded by saying that, due to the lack of synchronicity among the emanations aligned by ancient and modern concerns, it is almost impossible to cross the interpretive barrier that separates us from those cultures. So, as ordinary men, we will never fully understand their artistic creations.

"Fortunately, a sorcerer has special tools, because he has learned how to make his assemblage point flexible. He can connect his attention with the modality of awareness of other times, and he knows how to adjust his concern with that of sorcerers who have departed.

"Don Juan was an expert on prehispanic cultures. For him, old stones didn't hold any secrets. He sometimes brought me on a tour through the buildings of the museum of anthropology in order to make me experience a verification of these special agreements for myself."

Then Carlos told me about one of those visits, when he himself witnessed the specialized ways in which sorcerers contemplate the past.

"That morning, we had discussed historical topics; I was trying to convince him of the seriousness of my theories, and he was openly making fun of me. I got into a very heavy mood. Before entering

the museum, he manipulated my luminosity and made me enter a different state of awareness. His maneuver had the effect of charging the art works with life. Everything was there: the luminous egg, dreaming, the warrior's way, the movement of the assemblage point... it was tremendous!

"As I verified the authenticity of the teachings, I made a swift and thorough assessment of my position as a researcher. I understood that, in great measure, academic institutions had programmed me, not to impartially gather information, but to corroborate a certain description of the world, and this position prevented me from surrendering entirely to knowledge. So, when I did my fieldwork, I was not so much an impartial seeker of truth as an ambassador for another way of life. This generated an inevitable collision which often translated into distrust and mutual suspicion.

"As I was leaving my experience in the museum and returning to my habitual view, I could no longer understand, or even remember, my previous state of euphoria. But strangely enough, from that moment on, my academic point of view began to change. I learned how to see things as they were, without conceptual veils. Until then I had been an investigator at the service of a system of agreements - the Western culture. Suddenly I began to feel more and more comfortable with the idea that, under the anthropologist's skin, there was an ordinary man involved in the task of finding his destiny."

I asked him to give me some concrete example of how sorcerers interpret old monuments.

In response, he asked me:

"Have you seen the atlants of Tula?"

I told him I had, and he explained that those impressive figures of the Toltec age are a description of the party of the nagual. He maintained that the sixteen priests in bas-relief, which are in the four columns, behind the statues, represent the complete group of

warriors, divided into four teams, one for each of the cardinal points.

"They are cosmic travelers, and their mission is to flow with the energy of infinity. The objects they carry with them symbolized each of their functions. These priests are a party in mid-flight, an image of the final objective of the path, which is to reach the third attention."

For a long while, he continued giving his own interpretations of various archaeological objects. His stories were so graphic; he gave me the sensation of walking with him on the millenary paths of a prehispanic city. I could almost distinguish the enormous and impenetrable Olmecan heads there, at the end of central square; the human warmth of the smiling Huastecas statuettes which looked at us from the niches of the pyramids; the delicate Mayan stelas, talking nearby...

Carlos affirmed that the simple act of contemplating some archaeological pieces in a state of inner silence is enough to project the observer's attention to the position of the ancient artists. Hence, some of those pieces work as veritable traps of attention.

"Many of them were designed like that with deliberate intention. Their purpose was not ornamental or symbolic. Each one of their proportions and designs contain a detonator of psychic states and flows of energy. Those pieces are, you might say, catapults for the assemblage point. No professional investigation will ever be able to figure them out, because their creators were not in the least interested in adjusting themselves to rational criteria. To align with them, we have to have the guts to meet the challenge, and perceive in terms of silent knowledge."

He maintained that, because of their intent, the creations of prehispanic antiquity are true deposits of the second attention, an oasis of power in the middle of the dry sterility into which current civilization has thrown man.

"By encouraging me to present the heritage of ancient Mexico to the world at large, Don Juan began a kind of journey to the roots in order to validate aspects of the teachings which had remained hidden right up until today, and return to man the true dimensions of his being.

"As seekers of knowledge, we can have the full benefit of the old seers' intent today, in order to continue their work with renewed vigor."

Somewhat shyly, I asked Carlos if we could meet in some museum or archaeological site, where he could give me a practical demonstration of the keys to sorcery.

But he didn't approve of that suggestion. His answer was emphatical:

"All you want to know about your country; go and find out for yourself! As a Mexican, you are the best qualified to recover the Toltec message. That is your task, your commitment to the world. If you are too lazy to take it on, somebody else will."

The Antennas Of The Second Attention

One time, while we drank coffee in a restaurant in the center of the city, I told him that I got confused by his enthusiasm when he spoke of ancient Mexico, in contrast with the warning made in one of his books about the dangers of visiting ruins or picking up objects from that time. I was referring to the thrilling stories he wrote about some of his fellow apprentices, who got into serious trouble due to their habit of prowling around archaeological sites.

He replied that I had misunderstood.

"What happens is that I don't confuse the abstract knowledge of the new seers with the cultural focus of the seers of antiquity, because they are not the same thing. The old seers lived in the second attention, they were fascinated with its intricate details and they tried to reproduce them in their daily life by means of their sculptures and buildings. In that way, they put big chunks of that dark fascination within reach of the masses.

"But Don Juan said that any form of representing knowledge is a subterfuge, it shuts you off from true, silent knowledge. In spite of the prodigious quantity of information that they were

able to extract from the other side, the old seers ended up paying a high price for their propensity: Their freedom.

"Therefore, one of the priorities of a modern nagual is to direct his apprentices, at least during the first stages of the path, so that they are not trapped by the external side of knowledge.

"Also, there was another reason why Don Juan insisted to some of us that we must not waste our time trying to make sense of something that has none. At that time, most of his apprentices had still not lost their human form, which meant that we felt impelled to classify knowledge, systematizing it as quickly as possible. That is not valid with the artifacts of ancient Mexico, because what has come down to us is too fragmented . There is still a lot of work to

be done, and it is risky work, which can turn against the investigator."

"Why?"

"As I have already told you, these creations are not innocent. The problem with them is the passion they stir up. The old seers were masters of obsession. Their works are full of tricks, and all of it continues operating today with the same vigor as on the very first day, because the fixation of a sorcerer's attention doesn't wear away with time."

He added that the Mexican tradition of wisdom was designed by men of power in a supreme act of altruism. The intent was to rescue our essential freedom, but it only worked for a short time. And because they were steeped in rituals and superfluous beliefs, in the end their creations became means of fixating the assemblage point of that society.

"Those works are enormous concentrations of intent, but the teachings they guard are not pure, they are blended with the self- importance of their creators, and to focus on them should only be done through stalking. Pyramids are particularly powerful captors of attention. They can bring us quickly to states of inner silence, but they can also turn against us. There comes a point when it is preferable to abstain from them rather than venture without defenses into the domain of the old seers.

"Keeping in mind my morbid inclinations, Don Juan had forbidden me to go to museums or archaeological sites on my own. He said that those places were only to be trusted when in the company of sorcerers. One day, while walking through the ruins of Tula, I had a truly unpleasant experience and began to change my opinion."

"What happened to you?" I asked him.

"Something that made me tremble with fear," he answered. "I

could see that the pyramids exuded enormous energy fields,

undulating like a bottomless sea, completely wrapped around the visitors. A very enjoyable condition for certain sorcerers, but not for us."

I asked him if that phenomenon is only linked to Mexican pyramids, or if it can be seen in other parts of the world, too.

He answered that fixation is not a local phenomenon, it is universal. It appears wherever awareness strives to exist. But on Earth, only the human society invests a considerable part of its energy in creating symbolic objects of no utilitarian value, whose exclusive purpose is to generate states of attention.

"In fact, if they did not have this characteristic quality of being extraordinary energy accumulators, those objects and monuments would not exist. They are in this world, but they are not from here. They are agents from the other side, antennas of the second attention. Their design and construction were personally directed by inorganic beings in every latitude and era.

"Once, while traveling through Italy, I went to see a famous sculpture. I hardly dared to get up close, I was so captivated by its beauty. I observed that people passing by could not help projecting their feelings towards the image. The emotional climate was so powerful that I could easily perceive how those feelings elongated in the shape of fibers towards a shadow which was vibrating behind the sculpture. And I was not the only one who realized the phenomenon. There was a tourist there who, when he was

'attacked', took a stone and threw it against the statue. I applauded! Those things are centers of humanity's fixation. They condition the attention, they bind it."

I commented that it seemed pitiful that the most magnificent creations of humans were in fact vehicles of their fixation.

Carlos replied that I had it backwards. He said that the problem is not in the monuments, or in the intent that gave them existence, or even in the inorganic entities who use them as traps, but in ourselves.

"Those works belong to another modality of attention; they have the ability to move the assemblage point, and that gives a rest to our fixation. But there is nothing more obsessive than the second attention, and to feed it with unrestrained enthusiasm can put us in a state of total energetic submission. "However, that doesn't mean you cannot defend against those places. There are two ways by means of which we can counteract their heavy intent: turning away from them, or cultivating impeccability.

"A warrior is able to emerge intact from any conceivable situation. When we cut our ties with our human form, nothing external can affect us any more. Then the monuments of old Mexico are revealed in all their splendor and, at the same time, they take up position where they really belong: The place of silent understanding."

8

Validating The Nagual

In the months following our first encounter, my commitment to Carlos stayed on the level of attending his lectures and reading his books. But it didn't take long before the magic of his teachings began to attract me with a force of its own.

This situation confronted me with a choice, which I suppose presents itself to every apprentice of nagualism: On the one hand, I could analyze the strange ideas of sorcerers in the light of academic knowledge, assimilating only what I could understand and verify. On the other

hand, there was always the possibility of accepting Carlos' words to the letter, provisionally relegating my prejudices until I could work out a framework of my own, supported by experience.

When I told him about my dilemma, he was happy and told me the two options I had considered had one important thing in common: Practice. So it didn't matter which one of them I would adopt, as long as I was inflexible in my conclusions.

I tried to elicit some explanations from him that might serve as a point of support in my mind and enable me to accommodate his postulates, but he interrupted me with a gesture:

"A warrior is not ahead of knowledge," he told me. "He doesn't make enquiries out of habit, nor does he succumb to the sense of not understanding. When he wants to know something, he experiences it."

I made him notice that the word 'experience' had a very different meaning according to who pronounced it. For him, it meant a way of facing life; for me, the need to understand a phenomenon on an intellectual level.

I thought I saw Carlos repressing an ironic smile. In a very kind tone, he explained that the knowledge and exercises of sorcerers are not by themselves difficult to understand or to practice. What makes them seem crazy, is the fact that they were designed by a culture alien to us, and for people with a different understanding of the world. He attributed my initial distrust to my rational configuration, not to any impediment of energy.

He added that modern science has not been able to penetrate the Toltec knowledge because it has no appropriate methodology, not because the principles of sorcerers and scientists are intrinsically incompatible.

"In spite of all their good intentions, researchers are unable to move their assemblage points on their own. That being the case, how could they understand what sorcerers say?"

"The lack of energy is a serious barrier between ordinary man and sorcerers, because, without the necessary power, corroboration of the phenomena of sorcery is impossible. It is as if two people are trying to communicate in different languages. In general, sorcerers lose in that kind of exchange. In other times, people were threatened into believing they would lose their soul if they listened to the sorcerer; today modern man is indoctrinated to believe that this vision is unscientific.

"The truth is something else. Practicing the warriors' principles, far from damaging our mental clarity, gives us valuable tools with which to manage knowledge. That is because these principles, when they are guided towards accumulating energy, zealously follow two scientific postulates: Experience, and verification.

"Contrary to what many think, the need to corroborate is not exclusive to Western culture, it is also an imperative in the Toltec tradition. Nagualism, as an ideological system, is not based on dogmas, but on the personal experience of generations of practitioners. It would be absurd to think that all those people, over thousands of years, have placed their trust in simple lies.

"Since its starting point is experimentation, we can say that nagualism is not a belief system, but a science."

This statement was too much for me.

Certain topics in Carlos' teaching had an undeniable practical value; for example, his constant advice to control self-importance, to acquire a clear vision of the privilege of living in this instant, and to adopt the strategic principles of the warrior's way.

However, other points of his conversations went beyond my capacity to understand. I simply could not accept that, in a parallel space to this world, a universe of laws that has nothing to do with our daily logic exists, populated by conscious entities that my senses cannot perceive.

From the expression on my face, Carlos no doubt realized that I

didn't entirely agree with what he had said, because he added:

"For you, to corroborate is to explain, while for sorcerers is to witness indescribable things without subterfuge or mental tricks. You believe that the reach of your senses is the real limit of the universe, but you don't stop to think that your senses are very poorly trained.

"I am not inviting you to believe, but to see, and I assure you that seeing is sufficient proof of everything I have told you. However, I cannot attest the energetic essence of the world for you; that you have to intend on your own, and to find inside your innate potentialities the way of carrying it out.

"What differentiates a contemporary scientist from a seer is that for the former, what's at stake is his own life, while for the latter, the only thing he stands to lose if something goes wrong in his investigations, is his time. The methods of both are equally rigorous, but different.

"A sorcerer cannot be satisfied if he can't verify for himself the stories he has been told. Just as there are degrees and levels of

scientific instruction, the sorcery apprentice soon discovers that there are certain very defined stages in the increase of his perception, and he won't rest until he reaches them, or perish in the attempt. So, as a method of investigation, nagualism is totally reliable.

"My instructor showed me that the mark of the new seers is their capacity to synthesize; they are abstract sorcerers." Carlos put great emphasis on this term, accentuating each syllable. "In fact, their focus is more rigorous than the focus of science, because seers are involved in an enterprise of a colossal magnitude, which men of science don't even dare to formulate: The verification of our interpretation concerning the consensual reality in which we live. With that as a starting point, you can see how sorcery is the best ally of formal thought.

"Some day, it will be possible to break the ice, and science will discover that it shares a great vocation with nagualism: a passion for truth. Then both modalities of investigation will shake hands and cease being antagonistic points of view. They will fuse into one intent to penetrate the mystery."

While we said goodbye, I remarked to Carlos that his statements were on the opposite extreme of the view that most people have on the topic of sorcery.

He shrugged, as if to say: "And what does that matter?"

Return To The Essence

After practicing for a while, Carlos' teachings began to leave an imprint in me. What was mistrust at the beginning, soon became an astonished verification of states of awareness beyond my mental parameters. Suddenly I was possessed by an urgent need to understand, although not with my reason, but with the totality of my body. I came to a point where the foundations of my everyday existence finally crumbled, and it became evident to me that the perception of sorcerers contains universes of experiences which, until then, I hadn't had the slightest awareness of.

During this whole process, I went through an intense identity crisis, behaving as a daring and unprejudiced investigator at one moment, while at the next moment turning into the epitome of mental resistance. I realized that these emotional fluctuations had to do with Carlos' conversations. After listening to him, weeks passed in feverish activity, attempting dreaming and practicing all the techniques I had heard or read about. But, little by little, my initial enthusiasm cooled down, and I would return to the uncomfortable feeling of not understanding anything.

Faced with the chaos of new sensations which began to saturate me, I discovered that I only had one defense: Reason. More than ever, I tried to convince myself that, ultimately, only the things which can be fully explained can be true. In spite of everything Carlos had noted about how deceptive reason can be, I would only be willing to tolerate this point if I myself witnessed some prodigious act that truly challenged natural laws.

That morning, we had an appointment in a restaurant in front of the hotel where he stayed. We were practically alone in the room, apart from a shoe-shiner who nodded in a corner, and the waiter who looked at us with an air of boredom. Judging that this was an appropriate moment, I asked:

"Can you prove your teachings to me with some act of power?"

He looked at me with astonishment, as if he had expected anything but this, and took some seconds to answer me.

"Unfortunately," he said, "I cannot prove anything to your mind. It's too far gone.

"To validate the nagual, you need free energy, and for that, the only source I know of is impeccability. In the world of energy, everything has its price, so it depends on you. I cannot silence your mind, but you can, and thus verify what I'm telling you for yourself."

I asked him what I could do with the doubts which inevitably arose in my mind.

He answered:

"Uncertainty is the natural state of victims; on the other hand, trust and audacity are the characteristics of predators. You decide.

"The main thing is that you realize that there is no such thing as

'the teachings of Castaneda'. I just try to be direct and to act from my silence - a course of action which I recommend for you, because it does away with madness. I am not a powerful

nagual like Don Juan, nor am I your benefactor. But I've been a witness to acts that would leave you speechless with surprise, and I don't mind at all telling you about it. It's just that those stories won't tell you anything, unless you lower your guard and allow them to penetrate you.

"If you want to verify the tales of power, you have to open up to experience. Don't shield yourself behind your interpretations, because in spite of all our studies as modern, ordinary men, we know very little about the world.

"You, like any other sorcery apprentice, have an enormous training field. For example, your emotional ups and downs, your energy drainages. Plug them, and you will see how things change. Those eight hours you spend every night like a vegetable, without

realizing anything. Explore them, take control and dare to be a witness. If you elucidate the secrets of your dreams, in the end you will see what I see and there won't be any more doubts in your mind."

We remained silent for a moment while our plates were served.

Carlos interrupted the silence.

"Remember, doubts are just mental noise. Nothing very deep."

I replied that according to what little I had learned in my passage through life, doubt is the base of all true knowledge.

But he had a different theory; he argued:

"So much time is spent accumulating stuff that it becomes very difficult to accept anything new. We are willing to waste years of our life filling out forms, or discussing with friends; but if someone tells us the world is unique and full of magic, we feel distrust and we run to take refuge in our catalog of preconceived ideas.

"On the other hand, a predator fights all his life to perfect his hunting techniques, always keeps his sense of opportunity alert, and is never confused by the appearance of things. He is cautious and patient. He knows that his prey may jump out from any bush, and that the smallest hesitation can be the difference between continuing to live, or perishing. He carries no doubts.

"A warrior is a hunter, not a cynical opportunist. Either he fully accepts the challenge of knowledge, with all that it involves, or his own achievements will regress him to a more awful condition than that of an ordinary man."

I felt that his words contained a veiled reproach. I tried to justify myself, but he interrupted me:

"It is obvious that you have been practicing. In those circumstances, your mind is disturbed. But the pain of your worrying will disappear as soon as you recognize that what you worry about is an implanted doubt.

"Like all of us, you have been trained to pass all the information you receive through the filter of reason. You remind me of a dog that lived in a senior citizens' home. When somebody, out of pity, threw him some crumb, he got so excited that he couldn't enjoy it calmly anymore. You are just like that. You are so grateful to your science that you think you owe it something, that you cannot be unfaithful to it. You don't dare to dream, you cannot enjoy the magical side of the world.

"You have given yourself a much too deceptive parameter for your verifications: Reason. What I propose is that you substitute that approach with another, more reliable and, above all, much wider one: Sanity. I have already explained to you that sorcerers claim there is a radical difference between the two concepts. To understand it better, think, for example, about the history of the world; most of it was made by very sane people who nevertheless dared to challenge commonly held beliefs, they were opposed to what seemed reasonable at that time.

"If you travel beyond our world, you will see that it is the same there. The universe is not reasonable, but it can be faced with energy and sanity. When you learn how to use it, then you understand it in a basic way, without words. Who needs words when one is a witness?

"I agree with you in that, from an everyday point of view, concepts of sorcery are completely senseless. But there is a deep dimension to our awareness, where the complaints of the mind don't penetrate, and a warrior won't rest until he finds it. Once there, he discovers that his own reason, when it is exercised with inflexible rigor and in its entirety, will automatically lead to sorcery, because the essence of reason is sobriety, indifference, and non-pity.

"Once he is the owner of his reason and no longer manipulated by it, a sorcerer can attempt the feat of speech, putting into words the unfathomable enigma of existence. But that is such a difficult art that you can only approach it by means of a great energy surplus.

"To be a warrior is an endless fight to be impeccable. The trick of sorcerers is that they know that the energy we invest in enslaving ourselves, is the same energy that can liberate us. We just have to rechannel it, and the tales of power will begin to materialize in front of our eyes.

"Therefore, don't fight against your uncertainty, go with it, use it as a stimulus for verification and put it to the service of your energy needs. Verify everything, don't let a tale of power remain in the domain of myths. Commit yourself intimately to knowledge, but commit as a warrior, not as a slave of reason!"

He pointed out an Indian girl who was passing by down the street, with a boy of nine months or so tied to her back. The face of the child radiated an insatiable curiosity, spilling and bubbling out of his black, round eyes which were like small obsidian mirrors, eagerly looking at everything.

Carlos continued:

"The warrior's commitment with the spirit consists of a return to our original nature. It is a pact we all seal, by the simple fact of having been born.

"Man is born with the impulse to witness everything, but it is brutally mutilated during the first years, and so we must rediscover it. You have to clean your concern of all prejudice and return to that boy's pure curiosity. A warrior is forced to verify all the knowledge that arrives

at his door, to experience it in full, no matter where it comes from. And then he has to have the necessary discerning ability to select and keep what is useful."

"Should I also apply that discerning ability to the path you preach?"

He seemed bothered by my question; and replied in a firm tone:

"I have already told you that there is no 'Castanedan' way, just as there is no Buddha's way, nor one of Jesus Christ! Haven't you understood yet that teachers are not necessary? I am not selling you merchandise, I don't care if you agree with me. I am only pointing out the address to you, out of sheer impersonal affection: Go and verify it, if that is what you want, and if not, keep your doubts."

When we said goodbye, Carlos told me:

"You should not pay too much attention to your worries. They are symptomatic. Something in your interior is giving in, and it is normal for your human form to defend itself. Very soon, your dealings with the nagual will make you shake in your boots, and you will need your sanity like never before. Maybe you will regret ever having asked me for a sign!"

I Believe Because I Want To

It's difficult for me to write about such a personal concept as the

'verification of the postulates of sorcerers'. To enable me to agree with them was not a matter of arriving at coherent explanations, but of being involved in a minimum of practical commitments, and building a new kind of consensus from there. The elements of that new language, the true dialogue of warriors, are not founded in our reason, but in our energy savings.

As Carlos explained to me, the validation of such an irrational topic as 'the movement of the assemblage point' can only be done via premises of power. Since any intent to explain something is a product of the fixation of the assemblage point in a specific position, there is no other way to corroborate its movement than moving it for ourselves, and see what happens.

Faced with the overwhelming logic of his argument, I asked him:

"Does that mean that it's not possible to verify the statements of sorcerers from the outside?"

"On the contrary!" he answered. "The effects of power can only be lived from the outside, because, once our attention flows, we stop being a rigid and isolated 'me', and instead we blend into the world that surrounds us. That's why seers say that the mystery of the world is not inside, but outside. Or in other words, the solution is not mental, it is practical!"

I asked him what was practical about a topic as vague as the movement of the assemblage point.

He replied that the movement was something vague for me, because I didn't have any voluntary control over my states of awareness. As an example, he mentioned learning how to read and write, something that may seem completely unimportant to a savage, but ends up becoming a vital necessity for civilized man.

And that example, he said, could only give a bleak idea of how urgent the control of the assemblage point becomes for a sorcerer.

I wanted to know how it was possible that a topic of such importance goes unnoticed in the life of the immense majority of people.

He answered that the movement of the assemblage point is something as natural, and at the same time as sophisticated, as speaking or thinking. If we are not taught how to do it, we never do it.

He assured me that the key to either reaching or losing the extraordinary achievements of sorcery resides in consensus, in the agreements we make.

"To verify facts, one first has to agree on their meaning. Unfortunately, for most people to agree means to be rigid, and not depart from the official description. We must have a strong will to learn, if we are to dare exploring other areas of consent.

"Sorcerers have found that there are two ways of agreeing. The first one is the collective consensus; it starts from reason and it can take you very far, but it will inevitably throw you into a paradox in the end. The other is the consensus induced by a movement of the assemblage point, and it can only be corroborated by those that share similar circumstances.

"A consensus based on individual experience has an advantage over one based on explanations, because the life of the senses is complete in itself; reason, on the other hand, only works by means of comparisons, positive and negative, certain or false, and so on.

"The first effect of penetrating the consensus of sorcerers is that those dualities we have always accepted as something self-evident stop being operative, which in the beginning is extremely disconcerting for the reason. In time, sorcerers learn that in a world where there are no solid objects, but rather beings who flow

among various states of awareness, it doesn't make sense to try to separate truth from lies.

"Don Juan said that the truth is like the cornerstone of a building, a sensible man should not try to remove it! When we surrender to definitions, our energy becomes stagnated, or blocked. The tendency to do that is an imposition of the foreign mind, and we have to put an end to it. To substitute the reason-based consensus with experience was what Don Juan called 'to believe without believing'. For sorcerers, this completely redefines the concept of corroboration.

"They don't look for definitions, but for results. If a practice is able to elevate our level of awareness, what does it matter how we explain it to ourselves! The means by which we will start acting to save and increase our energy are not important, because once we are in possession of our totality, we enter a new field of attention where we don't care about concepts anymore, and things demonstrate themselves.

"Perhaps you think these statements just give permission to be irresponsible. But a warrior understands the real message: 'Reality' is a 'doing', and a doing is measured by its fruits.

"Anyone who judges a sorcerer from an everyday point of view, will judge him to be an irremediable liar, because the universes of both don't coincide. And if the sorcerer tries to

explain inexplicable things with borrowed words, he will inevitably become entangled in contradictions and be seen as a humbug or a lunatic. That's why I have said that from the point of view of the everyday world, the world of the nagual is a fraud.

"In fact, this goes for all 'isms', nagualism is not an exception. But as opposed to the defenders of reason, who seek followers for their particular kind of agreement, a sorcerer won't tell you that his vision of the world is the real one; he tells you: 'I believe because I want to, and you can do it, too'. This expression of will is something very powerful, and will provoke, as an avalanche, events of power.

"If you pay close attention, you will notice that children don't just

'innocently' believe in the magic of the world; they believe because they are complete and they see! And the same thing happens with sorcerers. The fabulous stories I have told you don't belong to the plane of reality in which you and I are having this conversation, but they happened!

"Nagualism is like somebody who inherited a story and a treasure map, but doesn't believe in it, so he comes to you and gives his secret to you. And you are so clever, or so naive, that you take the story as truth and dedicate yourself to deciphering the map. But the map is coded with various keys, which makes you learn several languages, go to difficult places, dig in the ground, climb mountains, descend into ravines, and dive in deep waters.

"In the end, after years of searching, you arrive at the place where the treasure should be, and - oh how disappointing! - you just find a mirror. Was it a lie? Well, you are healthy, strong, well educated, full of adventures, and you've had a great experience. Truly, there was a treasure there!

"Keeping in mind that there are neither truths nor lies in the flow of energy, a warrior chooses to believe by predilection, for the excitement of the adventure, and in this way he learns to focus on the world from another point of view - the focus of silence. It is only then that the immense treasure of the teachings is revealed."

A New Stage Of Knowledge

When the presentation of his new book ended, we left and walked along Insurgentes Avenue. It was night, a little cold, and surprisingly clear. The air smelled clean.

While we walked, Carlos commented that what he didn't like about that kind of activity was meeting so many sycophants, and the fact that they forced him to toast with champagne. His technique was to keep one full glass during the whole event, without having even one sip; that way, they stopped inviting him.

He added that his literary career began with a challenge. One time, Don Juan put forward the proposal that in order to utilize the heaps of notes he had taken during his apprenticeship, he should write a book. "In the beginning I considered it a joke, since I was not a writer. However, Don Juan outlined it to me as a sorcery exercise."

Once he had started, he began to take pleasure in the work, and ended up understanding that, for him, books were an avenue to his real mission as a nagual.

I asked him if he didn't fear that divulging the knowledge to all kinds of people would end up corrupting it.

"No!" he answered. "What degenerates knowledge is secrecy. Putting it within reach of people renews it. Nothing is more healthy for energy than fluency, and that concerns the knowledge of sorcerers most of all. We are temporary recipients of power, we are not entitled to retain it. Also, this knowledge only makes sense for those who practice it and achieve the necessary energy to corroborate it. The rest don't matter.

"I entered the world of the nagual at the precise moment when a rupture was necessary. That forced me to face the most dramatic decision of my life: To publish the teachings. It has been very hard for me to be the representative of such a watershed, and for years I lived with the "trauma of not understanding what I was doing. There were people who even wrote me threatening letters in the name of tradition; the sorcerers of the old guard didn't want to lose their prerogatives."

I told him how extraordinary I thought it was, that he should choose to break so drastically with the millennial tradition of secrecy.

"I didn't break anything!" he replied. "The command of the spirit was clear. All I did was comply with it.

"In the beginning of my apprenticeship, I was prepared to take the reins of the lineage. One day everything changed. Warriors of the party saw that my energy structure was different to the nagual Juan Matus' energy, and they interpreted it as a command with no possibility of appeal. As the Rule dictates, they put in my hands the heavy responsibility of closing the lineage.

"For centuries, parties of warriors had acted as a sponge, absorbing experience to corroborate the sophisticated principles of the way of knowledge. The only exit left for me was to return that knowledge to the people.

"The cycle of my books is a beginning, a humble intent to put within reach of modern man fragments of a knowledge which was hidden for generations. The moment for corroborations will come later, and other cycles will follow, because once the teachings of sorcerers come into the hands of the public, it is inevitable that some begin to question and experiment with perception, and in that way discover the entire potential of which we are capable."

I asked him how Don Juan's and his cohorts had reacted when they realized that the secrets of the group were being disclosed. He answered:

"I have already described how on one occasion, when I brought a copy of one of my books to Don Juan, he returned it to me with a scornful comment. That is only half of the truth. The fact is that he was the author of those texts. He didn't write them letter by letter, but he was in charge of the whole matter and he supervised every one of my statements. In time, I discovered that Don Juan's strategy had been carefully calculated.

"The plan of the nagual has supreme audacity and a brilliant simplicity. He introduced the knowledge of seers to the public, not to contribute to the grandeur of academia, but to elevate the level of awareness in the masses; and he presented it through the very institutions that might refute him. He knew that exposing the teachings through a mystic or religious format

would not penetrate as deeply as a presentation with the support of a scientific guarantee. For that reason he demanded that I shape my first book as a thesis for my degree.

"The operation of the nagual Juan Matus initiates a new stage in the transmission of knowledge, an unprecedented stage. The secrets of the movement of the assemblage point have never been put within reach of the public before!"

The Appointment Is With Dreaming

When I told him that I had been visiting certain groups based in the Mexican tradition in search of keys to ancient knowledge, Carlos took it as a joke and started to laugh. Seeing my disconcerted reaction, he asked me not to take his laughing personally. It was just that my investigations reminded him of his own actions when he came to Mexico as a student in search of information.

He explained that, according to Don Juan's teachings and what he himself had been able to discover, there are two kinds of tradition: The formal, and the energetic. The first one doesn't have anything to do with the other.

"The formal tradition depends on secrets and the preservation of routines, it teaches allegories and produces shepherds and flocks. The energetic tradition deals with concrete achievements, like seeing and moving the assemblage point; its strength is renewal and experimentation, and it produces impeccable warriors.

"A warrior is devoted to his task, he doesn't waste his energy on following anybody. He doesn't care about social customs, whether they may be contemporary or represent millennia of tradition. Also, secrecy is not part of his stalking."

I replied that, in my opinion, believing that an ancestral knowledge exists in various traditions on Earth is justified by the fact that techniques of manipulation of awareness cannot be imparted by means of books, but only from mouth to hear. The interaction with a teacher of wisdom has to be personal.

He commented:

"You read that somewhere, right?"

We both laughed.

He told me that truly useful knowledge is very simple, and can be expressed in very few words.

"It is not necessary to make so much noise about it, and it doesn't matter how it is transmitted. If it is orally, well, great - but any other means will serve equally well. The important thing is to convince oneself that there is no time for foolishness, because death is at our heels. Beyond that truth, a warrior needs very little, because his sense of urgency will make him save his energy and his accumulated energy will allow him to discover his totality."

I commented that, according to what I had read, divulging secret knowledge is characteristic of 'black' sorcerers; on the other hand,

'white' sorcerers transmit what they know with restraint, because they are aware that knowledge involves a certain danger to those who are not prepared to receive it.

Carlos shook his head with incredulity.

"But what is going on with you?" he asked. "What destroys us is ignorance, not knowledge! There is nothing in the profundities of knowledge that can put man's authentic interests at risk!

"You started from an erroneous, but very common idea: That there are two kinds of knowledge, an 'outside' one and an 'inside' one. Seers, on the other hand, say that knowledge is one, and what does not bring you to freedom is not worthwhile. For them, the truth is the opposite of what you say; the dark sorcery of the ancients is associated with secrets, while transparency is the characteristic of the new seers."

"Then, Carlos, do you deny the existence of any initiated knowledge inside the Mexican tradition?"

Instead of answering, Carlos demanded that I define the term

'initiated'. This got me in trouble, since in fact I didn't have a very clear idea about this. Making an effort, I explained to him that initiates are people who, thanks to their merits, become recipients

of a particular traditional knowledge the rest of their fellow men do not share.

While I spoke, Carlos agreed gravely. When I finished, he commented: "That definition is a portrait of the importance you grant yourself".

He maintained that classifying human beings for what they know is a mere arrangement of the collective inventory, something like making distinctions among a line of ants because some are slightly darker than others.

"The ironic thing is that we human beings do in fact divide ourselves into two groups: Those who dissipate their energy, and those who conserve it. You can call the last ones whatever you want, sorcerers, Toltecs, initiated; and it's the same whether they have a teacher or not. Their luminous reality is such that they are a step away from freedom.

What nobody can teach them, warriors obtain by themselves by listening to the silent commands of the spirit.

"To open up to power is a natural process. No man can tell another: 'You are already open!' - unless he is a charlatan. Nor are there any shortcuts that will automatically bring us to freedom. The secrets of initiation are symbols of the arrogance of the ancients, keys without a door, they will get you nowhere. You can spend your life pursuing them and when you finally obtain them, you'll discover you have nothing.

"You believe that what differentiates knowledge is the way it is transmitted, whether by books or by oral tradition. It has not occurred to you that both methods are the same, because both belong to our everyday agreements. What is important about the way you receive information? What matters is that you become convinced to act!

"The method of sorcerers is the systematic saving of energy. They state that what separates men is not what they know, but how much energy they possess; therefore, the true way to transmit

knowledge is in increased states of awareness. The appointment of sorcerers is not with a book or a ceremony, but with dreaming. When a warrior learns how to capture experience through his dreams, it doesn't matter under which label the teachings are presented, since his perception is pure and he can corroborate it with his seeing."

Bringing The Teachings To The Masses

In another of our conversations he told me that, although they were antithetical in many aspects, there was one thing neither the old nor the new seers questioned: The need to keep the knowledge hidden. They transformed the Toltec language into a forest of metaphors, where almost anything could be said with almost any combination of words. And it was also they who sank prehispanic societies under an unbearable load of rituals, procedures, and secret passwords. Instead of strengthening sorcery, this weakened it.

"The heritage of secrecy still burdens some groups of knowledge, although I have tried to shake it."

I asked him why sorcerers try to hide knowledge.

He answered that each cycle of seers had their own reasons for doing it.

"The ancients started with an understanding that we are transitory, but they allowed themselves to become corrupted by seductive ideas of survival. As a result, they were filled with self-importance and lapsed into exclusivity. They were like the pyramids they built: As obvious and attractive as they were secretive and inaccessible. They preferred to keep themselves apart from the average people whom they saw as unworthy and ignorant. But, at the same time, they couldn't do without a court of followers. That contradiction caused long wars for control of the flock and destroyed a great deal of real knowledge.

"Self-importance and its unpleasant relatives, secrecy and exclusivity, feed on the fixation of the assemblage point. For that reason, the ancients had a great interest in generating rigid traditions, in order to achieve maximum stability at the core of their societies. In reality, their concern for the spirit was very mixed up with their ambitions for temporal power.

"The new seers discontinued all that by giving the fluidity of the assemblage point first priority. They had observed that, as soon as that point moves, the idea of secrecy changes into idiocy, because in the realm of energy there are no rigid limits between conscious beings. In consequence, what became most important for them was to get rid of all speculation and emphasize the practical side of the path.

"However, they soon came into contact with a bitter reality, and that was that ordinary people didn't understand them; on the contrary, they were afraid and tried to destroy them whenever they saw them. The secrecy of the new seers was not motivated by the feelings of superiority that moved their predecessors, but was adopted for strategic reasons. They had to endure extreme persecution and were forced to protect themselves.

"It is an historical irony that, in spite of the legitimacy of their motives, in time the strategy of the new seers has caused the same effects as the arrogance of the old ones. After centuries of secrecy, all their energy had gone into hiding their knowledge, and many ended up forgetting what it was they had hidden.

"At present, the modality of our time is changing quickly; in consequence, something else, which seemed immovable, is also changing: The way the teachings are transmitted. Naguals nowadays are forced to find new channels for the energy, even if it means to eradicate the most entrenched customs."

"Why is this change happening?"

"Because circumstances have moved ahead of tradition. To maintain the knowledge hidden is no longer a vital demand. There are those who will criticize you for disclosing it, but nobody will kill for that reason today. So to continue the practice of censoring portions of knowledge has become catastrophic for the total objective of sorcery, because those portions ferment inside us and serve as food to the deep-seated sense of importance.

"My first task as a nagual was to put an end to the secrecy of my predecessors. The choice of modern warriors is freedom. Today, we can say whatever we want, giving our listeners the choice to take it or leave it. This has led to an extraordinary consequence, which previous naguals could never enjoy: Mass practicing.

"Mass practicing is our security valve. You can deceive people's minds, because after all their minds are not their own. But you cannot confuse the luminous mass of hundreds or thousands of intents focused collectively on the goal of freedom.

"Mass is energy, and energy allows us to break out of the stagnation of attention. Through collective practice of the magical passes, I have witnessed a true energetic manifestation around the world, something that for the first time has allowed me to believe in the feasibility of my task. My cohorts and I are so excited with what is happening that we don't have words to describe it."

The Magical Passes

For some years, Carlos had been teaching some movements to small groups that he called 'magical passes', because, according to him, they served to prevent energy from stagnating and forming

'balls'. 'The Play of the Drum' was one of the passes, 'The Arrow to the Right and Left', and 'The Dynamo' were among the others. He said Don Juan would practice them at any time of the day, wherever he happened to be. Mostly, he would do them before or after carrying something, or when he had been in the same position for a long while.

The matter interested me a lot, because I myself practiced some oriental postures, and was generally inclined towards physical exercises. Therefore, at the first opportunity that presented itself, I asked him where he had learned the magical passes.

He answered:

"They are the heritage of the ancient seers."

At that time, he was not much seen in public. But, little by little, his secrecy had become less rigid, and large groups of people began to approach him. As he began to teach the passes in public, Carlos began to change them somewhat, making them more complicated and dividing them into categories. He ended up giving them a name taken from architecture: Tensegrity, which, he told us, was the combination of two terms, tension and integrity.

From the very first, there were some detractors, resentful people who - without stopping to appreciate the practical side of these exercises - began to spread the word that the nagual had just invented them.

When I mentioned that I was worried about this, he was firm:

"Tensegrity is my intent! A nagual has authority, and this is my gift to the world.

"Don Juan and his warriors taught their apprentices many specific movements which filled us with energy and well-being, and helped free us from the yoke of the foreign mind. My role has been to modify them slightly, taking them out of the sphere of the personal and adapting them to people in general, so that they become useful to other groups of practitioners."

He told me that the method he had chosen in the beginning, of teaching the magical passes in a limited form, was in certain ways a failure, since those who were moved to practice them were too few to accumulate enough 'energetic mass'. So, in this new phase, he had created a system able to impact on the awareness of multitudes.

"My cohorts and I will open a great door in the energy. That fissure is so powerful that it will last for ages, and those who approach it to look inside will be swallowed to another world. With Tensegrity, what I seek is to train those who are interested so that they can support that transition. Those who don't have enough discipline, will perish in the intent.

"The plan of disclosing the teachings is the summary of thirty years of practices and experiments. As a man and as a nagual, I have done as much as I have been able to do to make it work, because I know that the collective mass of many warriors can cause a commotion in the modality of our time."

10

The End Of The Lineage

On various occasions, Carlos affirmed that Don Juan Matus¹ lineage ended with him. But when I wanted to know more about it, he insisted that, for now, he could not give me any more details.

"I can't know exactly what the design of power will be; who am I to determine something like that? I know the traditional form of the lineage which I belong to ends with me, but whether a new format will continue into the future or not is something that is determined by a superior force."

He told me he had spent years waiting for signs of continuity - concretely, a person that had the luminous characteristics to be the new nagual - but those signs didn't appear. Consequently, he had decided to act in an impeccable way, as if he were the last nagual on earth. From that came his urgency to tell everything.

"Take advantage of me!" he told me. "I am liquidating all that was given to me."

With Sadness, I asked if it meant that, after him, there would be no more teaching of the knowledge.

He answered:

"No, that's not what I mean. My destiny is to close a line, nothing more. I am sure the spirit will find the way of continuing ahead, because the current of knowledge cannot stop.

"The extinction of a lineage of sorcerers or the birth of another are constant incidents in the flow of energy. I know several parties of warriors living now, getting ready for the final jump, and I can

also foresee the beginning of a new cycle, corresponding to the renewal of cultural paradigms for the next millennium."

The Evolution Of The Path

That morning, Carlos asked me to choose my question carefully, because he didn't have much time to talk to me before catching his plane.

I said that I had been reading in his books about the cycles of warriors he called old and new seers, but I couldn't catch the difference between them.

He replied that I had chosen a good topic for conversation, since understanding that difference was a basic requirement to make sure one avoided the errors of the old seers.

He explained that, like everything in this universe, the path of sorcerers is evolutionary. For that reason, a nagual is always forced to refer to the teachings in new ways. As a consequence of that strategy, nagualism as a total system of practices is divided into breeds or cycles.

"Ever since man's adventure in search of the spirit began, and up until today, there have been three breeds of sorcerers at least: Those of the first period; the ancient seers; and the new ones. The first sorcerers lived a long time ago and were very different from us. Today we hardly understand their vision of the world, but we know that they survived under very difficult conditions, where any one of us would have succumbed.

"The ancient seers were a refinement of that original kind. They adapted to America's soil and knew how to create here real civilizations. They were formidable men, who used intent at a level that is incomprehensible to us. They were intoxicated with power. They could move gigantic stones, fly, or transform themselves at will. They cohabited with inorganic beings and created a culture to fit them, replete with fabulous stories.

"Legends describe them best. Those sorcerers are the heroes of our mythology. What they sought was to live at any price, and they got it!

"The ancient seers began to move their assemblage points through the consumption of power plants. After that, their inorganic teachers told them how to do things. They only needed to focus their interest in order to understand what this world is, and that interest made them design the most extraordinary techniques for the exploration of awareness.

"But don't think that the old seers were just men of action. They were, also very profound thinkers who took the art of comprehending to the limits of attention. Compared to them, we are beasts. Nowadays, man is not interested in the reason why he is alive, which is why he finds no peace and can't find himself. We have a lot to learn from those precursors, who found the answers which can bring us out of the dead end we are facing."

"What dead end are you talking about?"

"Our vision of a world of objects. That vision has been very useful, but at the same time the worst among our calamities. Modern man's concerns are the same as those of an animal: Use, possess, annihilate. But this animal has been domesticated, and is condemned to live inside a material inventory. Since every one of the objects he uses has a long history, modern man lives his life lost inside his own creation.

"In contrast, what concerned the ancient seers was the relationship between the cosmos and the being that is going to die. They were able to acquire their own vision. They didn't stop at one of the stations along the way, and forget that they were travelers."

I asked him why, if their vision was correct, there came a moment when the old seers were substituted by the cycle of new seers.

He answered that seeing is no guarantee of impeccability.

"The old seers could not separate a great dose of self-importance from their practices. Since they enjoyed having power over their fellow men, they were never able to focus clearly on the proposal of total freedom. Although they were unbeatable seers, it was impossible for them to foresee that their enthusiasm to discover the world should end up involving them in commitments that would trap them.

"Most modern sorcerers are the heirs of the old seers. By ignoring the warrior's principles, they have devaluated the knowledge. They have become storytellers, herbalists, healers, or dancers; they have lost control of the assemblage point. In many cases, they do not even remember that the point exists.

"The new seers tried to stop all this; they took what they could use from the vision of the ancients, but they were wiser and more moderate. They cultivated an unbending intent and turned all their attention towards the way of the warrior. In that way they changed the entire intent of the practices. Upon completing their energy, some of them glimpsed a higher goal than the adventure of the second attention and pondered the possibility of being free.

"Through their seeing, the new seers discovered something horrifying: That the enthusiasm of the old seers served as nutrition to certain conscious entities who were energy parasites. In the beginning, the contract between these beings and humans seemed very beneficial, we gave them part of our energy and they rewarded us with what was then a novelty: Reason. But in time it became obvious that the contract was a swindle. Reason is only good for making inventories of things, not for understanding them. Also, it has an unpleasant by-product which seers see as a membrane covering our luminosity: Self-importance.

"For the new seers, that was intolerable, because they had a goal in mind which had never occurred to the old seers: The possibility of merging with the universe directly, without using the inorganics as intermediaries.

"The new seers were pragmatic sorcerers, passionate about validation. In their desire to erase from their practices every last vestige of ego, they became distrustful people. Their method was elimination, they suppressed all that didn't point directly to their objective of total freedom. The result was that they became able to fixate their intent on intent itself, becoming one. Unhappily, that method forced them to sacrifice enormous portions of their knowledge.

"Their intent was so ferocious that it took them to close in on themselves. They filled their teaching with secrets. Since social relationships were not important for their objectives, they isolated themselves from society, creating their own, minuscule groups. Almost all of them left to live in the mountains, the forest, or the desert, where they remain until today, acquiring ethnic characteristics. That has certainly not helped them to refine the art of stalking; what's more, in the end it transformed their search for freedom into a purely rhetorical objective."

The Seers Of The New Era

"The old and the new seers represent two extreme positions facing the same challenge, the result of the adaptation of sorcerers to very concrete historical circumstances. But today, times, have changed.

"By the Eagle's design, at least one of the lineages of new seers has been able to redirect its task. The last twenty-seven naguals of my line had tried to recover the fearless spirit of the old seers, while at the same time maintaining the sobriety of purpose of the new. In that way, we were able to gather enough energy to attempt a new and more balanced adaptation of the teachings.

"According to Don Juan, massive changes in energy are happening at the present time, which will inevitably cause the emergence of a new cycle of warriors. To differentiate them from their predecessors, I have called them modern seers, or seers of the new era."

Before continuing with his story, Carlos clarified for me that his concept of the new era had nothing to do with the New Age contemporary mystic movement, but was rather an extension of the old prehispanic belief in a series of eras, following on one after the other in the history of the world.

I asked him why he had not mentioned anything about this new breed of warriors in his books.

He answered:

"My books describe a phase of my apprenticeship relative to my benefactor and his cohorts. Although they had conceptualized a new cycle as a strategic need, it was not part of their immediate life. They realized that their own actions departed from the Rule of the new seers when they allowed and even encouraged the popularization of the knowledge. But they left it to me to find the appropriate terms in which to describe what was happening."

"At what time did these seers begin to appear?"

"They are barely appearing yet.

"Everything began with the conquest of Mexico. The new seers took that change as a sign, and understood that it was necessary to review the tradition. But things would still have

stayed the same if it hadn't been for the manifestation in our lineage of a being whom we call 'the death defier'. He returned the sense of adventure and fascination for the unknown to the new seers. Contact with that entity has been decisive for us."

Eagerly, I asked him to tell me more about the death defier, one of the most extraordinary and incomprehensible characters of his books.

He answered:

"The death defier is an entity of supreme awareness. He was born about ten thousand years ago. But he appeared physically in the lineage at the time of the nagual Sebastian, in the year of 1723."

"Was the death defier a person?"

"He was a man in other times, when the thirst for knowledge was alive and mankind surrendered himself to his love for the Earth. He is the typical exponent of that mentality. If you spoke with him, you would notice that we share the same yearning for companionship, and an urge for the expansion of awareness. But you would also notice strange things. He lives in another vision. His sense of self is very different from ours, because it embraces a very wide range of sensations. He doesn't have gender, age, nationality, or a defined language. He doesn't have friends or relatives; and worse, there is nobody in the world like him. He passes through the world like a ghost and spends most of his time ensconced in some deep niche of dreaming.

"His contribution to our lineage, as much in techniques as in theoretical knowledge, was monumental. That warrior knew all the

arts of the ancients, and much more! You can say that it was his appearance on the scene that led to the germination of the cycle of modern seers.

"The second sign which showed that the time of change was near, was the presence of a foreigner in the lineage: The nagual Luhan. As you already know, Luhan was Chinese. Although he had received a high education in his own country, his adventurous personality made him become a sailor, and he lived an erratic existence all over the planet, until one day his luck put him in the way of power.

"The young Luhan had disembarked in the port of Veracruz, and he was strolling around in search of amusement, when a dangerous incident brought him staggering out from a bar, where he collided head first into the nagual Santiesteban, who didn't have time to react. This event, unusual in the life of a sorcerer, was taken as a sign.

"You can imagine the bewilderment of the new seers! The spirit had spoken in an obvious way, and ordered that secrets guarded by generations of warriors should be put in the hands of a stranger. In that way, Luhan was accepted as the new nagual and his knowledge of martial arts became part and parcel of the heritage of the lineage.

"But the confirmation of these signs happened two centuries later, when another nagual whose luminous constitution was not of the conventional kind came into the hands of a certain strange old man, Don Juan Matus. Neither he nor I knew it then, but the destiny of the knowledge of the new seers had been sealed."

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Intellectual Preparation

In one of the last conversations we had, Carlos characterized the seers of today as warriors who are distinguished by their frankness. They reject the furtive attitudes that have traditionally distinguished sorcerers, and have renounced every doctrine that it's not crystal clear and based on immediate verification.

"Another peculiarity which identifies them is that, as opposed to their ancestors, they are collectively guided toward freedom. The old seers thought about freedom as a theoretical goal, something that was beyond their concrete possibilities - while the new seers saw it exclusively as an individual commitment. For the seers of today, however, to be free is the collective purpose of the group of power, the essence of their actions and their reason for being.

"Modern warriors are inflexibly committed to each other. They have sacrificed their concerns as individuals for the sake of the group. Their bond of power gives them encouragement and provides a continual challenge to prevent them from lowering their guard, and their oath as warriors is based on the purpose of departing together to the third attention. Closer than ever to freedom, these warriors are more independent and more self-sufficient than their predecessors.

"But the most remarkable thing about them is their capacity of revision. At this time, seekers of knowledge are forced to thoroughly examine everything that has been said in the past, adapting traditional knowledge to the modality of the time, in order for the warrior's way to be truly and finally understood by people,

"The technique which prevents that revision from drifting towards the capricious is seeing. To see the luminous nature of the world permits us to choose, without any possibility of error, the most appropriate symbols to transmit ideas.

"Part of my task as a nagual has been to renew the nomenclature. Words wear out. Don Juan himself used terms which, from my point of view, were already archaic, because they were linked to the Mexico of antiquity, not with today's world. However, due to lack of time, I have not dedicated enough attention to this matter. It is a task that I'm giving to those who want to assume it.

"The stage of knowledge inaugurated by my books breaks the course of nagualism in two. I have come to put emphasis on intent, the pursuit of sanity, the sobriety and sense of a group of power, and to abolish the servitude of secrecy and openly reveal the magical passes.

"The goal of modern seers is, more than ever, total freedom; but to achieve it, it is important that the strategies are continually refined. A society that no longer openly persecutes sorcerers does not serve us as a training ground. It is our duty, then, to find new fields where we can exercise and train our potentialities.

"According to Don Juan, the best of those fields is the intellect. And it also functions as a guarantee that strategies of popularization and adaptation will work correctly. Ignorance can no longer be accepted, the time of the wild sorcerers is already past. The sorcerers of the old guard were stagnated in their traditions, and they lost their ticket to eternity; we don't want the same thing to happen to us now.

Therefore, the Rule for the seers of the new era is preparation; that is their distinctive stamp. They should not only prepare in terms of the arts of sorcery, but also cultivate their minds in order to know and understand everything. The intellect is the comfort of today's Toltec, just as in the past, it was the affection for rituals.

"Don Juan said that each warrior of this new cycle should have at least a university degree, to take advantage of the defenses against disinformation which modern science has created. That will heighten the chances of survival for the entire party, and in the future this will be even more valuable."

11

The Task Of The Nagual

"Could you tell me what task the nagual Juan Matus gave to you?"

He looked at me with a surprised expression.

Usually, Carlos would hide his answers in between his words, or give them out little by little throughout his conversations. But this time he changed tactics.

He told me my question was so extraordinary that the only thing he could do was to take it as an omen. But the answer was such a personal thing that he could only tell me about it in an appropriate place. Therefore, he suggested that we meet the next day in the Tacuba café one of Don Juan's favorite restaurants.

After breakfast, he told me in a solemn tone that I should silence my internal dialogue, because we were about to visit a sacred place where a famous warrior of antiquity was buried. He added that the day was perfect for it, because since dawn a dark fog had hung over the city.

"And since everything has become sinister, our omens today will come from the left."

At first, his suggestive efforts made me feel privileged. But as we came closer to the main square, I became more and more apprehensive.

We entered through the small door set in the beautiful side door of the Cathedral of Mexico, and came into the gigantic main part of the church. Immediately, Carlos walked up to the fount of holy water, wet his fingers, and crossed himself. I was struck by the familiarity of his movements, it seemed like he was used to going to church.

Seeing my curiosity, he explained that a warrior should respect all conventions, particularly those of an institution like the Catholic Church, which has served as a sanctuary for sorcerers for centuries.

We sat down on the pews of the central nave of the church and remained silent for a while. There were very few people there, and the atmosphere was very calm. I noticed that he was sitting up straight and his eyes, neither open nor closed, were lost in the busy mass of decorations of the main altar. The light scent of candles drifted down to our pew, and also the murmur of children's voices that were rehearsing a chorus; or maybe it was a recorded tape.

Little by little I became engrossed in my own thoughts, until I lost track of where I was. His voice startled me:

"The task which my teacher gave me, and my mission as a nagual for the era which is commencing, is to move the assemblage point of the Earth."

I was expecting anything but that. For a few seconds, my mind didn't react; I simply didn't have a clue what Carlos was saying. But suddenly, the monstrosity of his task hit me in the center of my reason, and I found myself thinking that Carlos had either gone crazy, or he was talking about something I didn't have the faintest idea about.

Disconcerting me even further, he seemed to read my thoughts, because he made a little nod of agreement and murmured:

"That's it. You have to be crazy to let yourself commit to something like that, and even crazier to believe that it is possible to do."

I asked him how a man could possibly even think about a feat like that.

He answered:

"Just like the other world has its mobile unit - the inorganic beings

- Earth also has one, and it's us. We are children of the Earth. The movement of the assemblage point of a sufficient number of warriors can change the modality of the time, and that is what I am working towards."

He explained that the assemblage point of Earth has changed many times in the past, and will do so in the future. In recent times it has been moving steadily towards the area of reason.

"That is magnificent, because, once it is fixated there, humanity will have an opportunity to move to the other side, and many men and women will become aware. The challenge for the seers of the future will be to maintain that focus for the necessary length of time until it becomes fixated there, becoming a permanent position for the planet, a new center, which we will be able to turn to anytime in a perfectly natural way.

"The refocusing of the Earth's attention is the product of the combined action of many generations of naguals. The new seers conceived of it as a possibility, and discovered that it was part of the Rule. They incubated it with their intent, and determined that now is the time to begin it."

"What is the effect of that movement?"

"To move the fixation of the planet is the only way out from the dramatic state of slavery to which we have been reduced. The course of our civilization has no exit, because we are isolated in a remote location of the cosmos. If we don't learn how to travel along the avenues of awareness, we will come to such a state of frustration and despair that humanity will end up destroying itself. Our options are the way of the warrior, or extinction.

"However, I cannot know what the total effects of my task will be. The Earth's assemblage point is very big; it has an enormous inertia. My mission is to start the fire, but it will take time to get the blaze going. In fact, that task is not mine only, but belongs to all the seers who must come.

"Knowledge of the assemblage point is an unprecedented gift from the spirit to modern man, and it is the catalyst for changing the modality of this era. It is not a Utopia, but a real possibility that is waiting there, just around the corner.

"I don't want to speculate on my chances of being successful with this task; I just persist, because it is all that's left for me to do. Personally, I have no doubts. In my view, the future is luminous, because it belongs to awareness, which for sorcerers means that it belongs to nagualism."

Encounter In The Crypt

After describing his task, Carlos rose from the bench and went closer to the rail around the entrance to the crypt below the church. I followed him.

Pointing at the stairway with his chin, he told me:

"You should go down there. Inside, you will see a circle in the floor, which corresponds to the exact center of the main dome of the church. According to tradition, that is the original place where Cuauhtemoc, the last Aztec emperor, was buried."

I asked him how historically accurate that information was.

He replied that he didn't know, but that the catacomb was an interesting place, regardless.

"All I want you to do is stand for a while in the center of that circle with your eyes closed, to tune yourself in to the energy of the place. It is a place of power from the sorcerers of antiquity, and it will help you in your task."

Briefly holding my hand, he added that he could not accompany me this time because someone was waiting for him somewhere, and he wished me luck. Without giving me time to react, he turned and left.

Carlos' attitude - asking me to go down in the crypt, and then leave in a hurry - left me confused. I didn't know what to do. With some misgivings, I leaned out over of the narrow stairway and felt a cold, humid breeze. Filled with an irrational apprehension, I went down the stone steps to the entrance door.

The crypt was empty. It had a gloomy air, was poorly lit, smelled of mold and the dust of centuries, and it was utterly quiet. While I explored the tombs belonging to some privileged families of old

Mexico, a chill traveled up and down my back. If it had not been for my desire to fulfill the task Carlos had given me, I would have run out of there.

Trying to control my over-excited imagination, I placed myself in the place Carlos had indicated, a circular space defined by the intersection of two passageways. I closed my eyes and made an effort to silence my mind. After a moment, I realized that my internal dialogue had quieted by itself.

I don't know how much time passed. Suddenly, I felt I was being observed. I opened my eyes quickly, just in time to see, standing a short distance from where I was, a man wearing a hat, with indigenous features and a penetrating gaze. He was tall, strong, and quite old; he had a rural appearance, dressed in a loose white shirt and sandals, and carrying a rucksack. When noticing that I had discovered him, he slipped quickly towards an enclosure at the end of the passageway called the 'the bishops' crypt'. His steps didn't make the smallest noise.

Although I was very afraid, my curiosity was even greater, and while mentally preparing myself to face this strange character, I crossed the short distance which separated us - about seven or eight meters. When I came into the crypt, my surprise was total. There was nobody there. A quick inspection confirmed (hat the enclosure had no other exit, nor any space for a person to hide.

This time I panicked. I had goose bumps, and got the hell out of there

PART III

THE RULE OF THE THREE- PRONGED NAGUAL

Introduction

From an early age, the reflective bent of my character made me seek an explanation of who I am and what my purpose in life might be. Knowing of my search, a fellow student came to me once and told me that Carlos Castaneda was giving a private talk in his house, and that I could come if I wanted. I had waited for an opportunity like this for a long time, and was enchanted by the invitation.

Castaneda was a famous anthropologist, the author of several books on the culture of the Mexican sorcerers of the ancient past. In his books, he describes how, while still a student at the University of California, he did some work among the Yaqui Indians in northern Mexico, in order to learn about the medicinal plants they used.

On one of these trips, he met an old herbalist, famed as a sorcerer, who called himself Juan Matus. In time, the old man took him on as an apprentice, and introduced him to a completely unknown dimension for modern man: The traditional wisdom of the old Toltec seers, commonly known as 'sorcery' or 'nagualism'.

In a dozen books, Carlos describes a teacher/apprentice relationship that lasted for thirteen years. In the course of that time, he underwent an arduous training that led him to personally corroborate the foundations of that strange culture. The experiences he acquired during his apprenticeship ended up making the young anthropologist succumb to his fascination with the knowledge, and he was absorbed by the system of beliefs he was studying. This outcome shifted him a great distance away from his original goals.

'Nagualism' was the name sorcerers from prehispanic Mexico gave to their system of belief. According to history, those men were profoundly concerned with their relationship to the universe, to such a degree that they dedicated themselves to the task of

investigating the limits of perception through the use of hallucinogenic plants which allowed them to change levels of awareness. After practicing for generations, some of them learned how to see, in other words, to perceive the world, not as an interpretation, but as a constant flow of energy.

Nagualism consists of a group of techniques designed to alter our everyday perception, producing psychic and physical phenomena of extraordinary interest. For example, the Mexican tradition claims that a nagual is able to transform himself into an animal, because he has learned how to dream himself in a different form than that of a human being. Behind this popular belief is the fact that sorcerers explore their subconscious with the purpose of throwing light on unknown aspects of our being.

Nagualism was a socially accepted practice for thousands of years, comparable to our religion or science. In time, its postulates grew in abstraction and synthesis, becoming a kind of philosophical proposition, the practitioners of which took the name Toltecs.

The Toltecs were not what we ordinarily think of as 'sorcerers', that is, individuals who use supernatural forces to damage others, but rather extremely disciplined men and women who were interested in complex aspects of consciousness.

In his books, Carlos made a talented effort to adapt the knowledge of naguals to our time, lifting it out of its rural atmosphere and making it accessible to people with a Western background. Starting from Don Juan's teachings, he defined the premises of the path of the warrior, or the path of impeccable behavior, consistent in control, discipline, and sustained effort. Once internalized, these principles carry the practitioner to other more complex techniques whose object is to perceive the world in a new way.

Having achieved this, the student is in a position to move in a voluntary and conscious way in the environment of dreams, in just the same way as he moves in his daily life. This technique is supplemented with what Don Juan called 'the art of stalking', or the art of knowing oneself, and with a daily exercise called

'recapitulation' because it consists of reviewing events of our personal history to find their hidden plot.

Dreaming and recapitulation together make it possible to create what is called 'the energetic double', a practically indestructible entity, able to act on its own accord.

One of the most significant discoveries of the Toltec seers was that human beings possess a luminous configuration, or energy field, around the physical body. They also saw that some were equipped with a special configuration, divided into two parts. These were called naguals, that is, 'duplicated people'. Because of their particular configuration, a nagual has greater resources than most people. They also saw that, because of their double and exceptional energy, they are natural leaders.

Starting from these discoveries, it was inevitable that seers would settle down according to the commands of energy, organizing harmonious groups whose participants complemented each other. Warriors of these groups were committed to the search for new levels of awareness. In time, they began to realize that behind their practices and organizational forms, there was an impersonal Rule.

In their sense of the word, the Rule is the description of the design and the means by which various luminous configurations of the human species can become united, eventually to integrate into a single organism called 'the party of the nagual'. The goal of these groups is total freedom; the evolution of awareness to the point of enabling them to travel through the ocean of cosmic energy, perceiving all that is accessible to us.

There is a special section of the Rule that describes how generations of warriors are intertwined, forming lineages, and how these lineages are renewed every once in a while.

The fate of Carlos was to live through one of those stages of renewal. However, he did not understand what that meant before he received a message which guided him towards the popularization of the teachings.

When I met him, he still had great reservations about the public domain and tried to keep his distance from people. Our relationship was mainly through talks he gave to small groups, and private conversations.

He demanded that I should pass unnoticed among the others, so that I would keep my personal history under a measure of control. Later, he admitted that this request also had a deeper motive: I had a commitment to the spirit, and should execute my task four years after Carlos' departure.

When I asked him why, he told me that he knew that his work would be obstructed by detractors who would try to frustrate the plan designed by Don Juan for a revolution of awareness. My function would be to give testimony of the message that I had received.

The Omen

One time, after giving a talk in the private dining room of a restaurant where he invited all of us to dine, Carlos asked me to come with him to another place. Minutes later, we both left, while the others were still in the middle of a lively conversation.

On the way, we had to cross a large avenue. To get ahead of the cars, I ran towards a triangular traffic island in the middle of the street, believing that Carlos was right behind me. But when I got there, I realized that he was still waiting on the other side.

Then something unexpected happened; a great gust of wind came rushing down the avenue, so strong that I had to hold on to the metal post of a traffic sign. Before I had time to protect myself, a cloud of dust got into my eyes and throat, making me cough and leaving me blind for a moment.

When I recovered, Carlos was at my side, looking at me with a radiantly happy face. He patted my back and made a very strange comment:

"I know what to do with you!"

I looked questioningly at him, and he explained:

"That was the same wind, it is after you."

His words made me remember the moment we met, when an autumn wind had forced us to hastily close the windows of the room where a group of friends were waiting for him.

"On that occasion, you saw it as a strong wind, but I knew that it was the spirit making whirls over your head. It was a sign, and now I know why it pointed you out."

I asked him to explain this enigmatic statement, but his answer was even more obscure:

"I am heir to certain information. It is an aspect of the teachings that concerns me so deeply that I can't explain it to the others. It should be said through a messenger. While I was watching how the spirit danced with you on the edge of the avenue, I knew that the messenger is you."

I insisted he must tell me more, but he said this was neither the time nor the appropriate place.

What Is The Rule?

Some time later, we were walking to the Alameda park. Near the Palace of Fine Arts, he signaled to me that we should sit down on a bench, miraculously empty, on one side of the square. The bench was made of wrought iron. Its location - right in front of the main door of an old church built from blocks of red and black lava - had the virtue of slightly blocking my internal dialogue, which transported me to an oasis of serenity amid the bustle of cars and people passing by.

As it turned out, Carlos had foreseen this impact and its didactic function. He commented that it was Don Juan's favorite bench, which I found very moving. Rubbing his hands together, he assured me that it was time to get to the point.

"Do you know what the Rule is?" he asked.

Although I had read something about it in one of his books, I had not understood much, so I shook my head no.

He went on:

"It is the name that seers have given to the guide of a party of sorcerers, a kind of navigational chart, or a sample book of a warrior's assignments and duties within the framework of his practices.

"After exhaustive verifications, the sorcerers of ancient Mexico came to the conclusion that, just as all live beings possess a defined biological pattern which allows reproducing and evolving, we also have an energy pattern responsible for our development as luminous beings.

"The mold of a species extracts its energy from the Rule. The Rule is a kind of womb, it contains an evolutionary plan for every living being, not only on Earth, but also in any corner of the universe

where there is awareness. Nobody can break away from it. The most we can do is ignore that it exists, in which case we won't reach the stage where we can be what we truly are: Live mass in the service of a purpose that we don't understand.

"Said in sorcerers' terms, the Rule is the diagram of the Eagle's commands, an equation which correlates the effectiveness of actions with the saving of energy. In the practical sphere, such a combination cannot produce anything but a warrior.

"The Rule is complete, and covers all facets of the warrior's way. It describes how a nagual party is created and nurtured, how generations are connected to form a lineage, and it guides them towards freedom. But in order to use it as a key to power, we have to verify it for ourselves."

"How can you verify it?"

"The Rule is self-evident to the sorcerer who sees. For a beginner like you, the best way of attesting its functionality consists of detecting its intrusion in the course of your life."

The Origin Of The Rule

I asked him how man had come into contact with this matrix.

Hereplied:

"It has always existed. However, seers are its discoverers and guardians.

"The Rule is the origin of the universal order. Its operation and purpose are ignored, not because they are not known, but because they are not understood. Hundreds of generations of sorcerers gave their lives in their zeal to elucidate it, and to develop practical proposals for every one of its conceptual units.

"In the beginning, no man attempted to catch a gleam of this structure, because nobody knew it was there. As the seers of old Mexico came into contact with other aware entities on this Earth, much older and more experienced than (he seers themselves, they began acquiring portions of the Rule. One day they saw that all those portions fit into each other like a puzzle. That day, they discovered what they called 'the map', and the lineage of the seers of antiquity began.

"Through their seeing, they verified each portion related to dreaming. They tested every combination, determining their effects on awareness. They organized exercises of dreaming on seven levels of increasing depth, and they penetrated the innermost twists and turns of the universe. Little by little, they developed the pattern for the nagual party, a structure in the shape of an extremely stable pyramid, capable of expressing the designs of power with transparent clarity.

"But there was one thing the ancients didn't verify: The Rule for the stalkers. They viewed stalking as a latent possibility which was not worthwhile to explore in practice."

"Why?"

"Because, in an era when being a sorcerer meant being at the top of the social scale, stalking as an art had no purpose. It would have been a poor investment. But when the modality of the time changed, that line of reasoning brought the old seers almost to the edge of extinction.

"It was not until the appearance of the Toltecs that the other great portion of the Rule revealed its extraordinary content. Lineages who were able to apply it were the only ones who survived; the rest were dissolved, and got lost in the vortex which signified the fall of the old seers' regime. The incorporation of stalking determined the birth of the new seers. With them, the Rule of the nagual was completely elucidated."

"When did that happen?"

"The period of the new seers began about five thousand years ago, and reached its peak in the times of Tula. Through stalking, the fundamental contribution of those warriors to sorcery was the notion of impeccability'.

An Impersonal Organism

"The objective of the Rule of the nagual is to generate parties; that is, self-aware organisms capable of flying into the immensity out there. Such organisms are made up by the sum of a group of warriors who have harmonized their individual intents. The purpose of that design is to perpetuate a non-human dimension of awareness."

"Non-human?"

"That's it. A dimension in which personality is no longer the aim.

"Human beings are unable to enter and remain for any extended length of time inside the realm of cosmic awareness - the state which Don Juan called 'the third attention'. Either we leave it and forget, or we stay and melt into that unfathomable sea. But the power that governs us has found the way to get around this limitation, by creating organisms in which individual entities work as members.

"At the core of these organisms a radically new kind of attention is generated, an intent oriented towards exploring the unknown, investigating in teams what we otherwise cannot know. Feelings of individuality are no longer their operative center, because they have been substituted by something much more intense: Living as part of the whole, an energy state that no ordinary man can even conceive of. There are no routines, there is no ego, there is no ignorance, there is no interpretation. That kind of organism is only one stage on the infinite path of awareness, but for us human beings, that stage is final."

I asked him how the awareness of a party operates.

He gave me an analogy of the physical body.

"Although only in a hazy way, each one of our cells is conscious of their unity and, within certain limits, each one can act independently. However, their individual intent is subordinate to a superior purpose, which is to form the whole, which we call 'me'.

"When we finally arrive at the incredible achievement of realizing the global purpose, we can discern a superior evolutionary line. We perceive the possibility of being integrated with our complementary energetic beings, creating a form of life whose purposes are as far from the concerns of the daily world as the awareness of a single cell is from our totality. New seers call that life-form 'the party of the nagual'."

"Who are our complementary energetic beings?"

"Human beings who possess luminous characteristics that complement each other.

"Energy is recurrent, it generates patterns that we all share. In general terms, it can be said that there are four basic luminous patterns with twelve variants, synthesized by the nagual man and nagual woman. As a tonal approaches the ideal luminosity for its type, it manifests a superior degree of awareness.

"When ideal models meet, they combine. The feelings of attraction among human beings can be explained as a result of the fusion of their energy molds. Normally, such a fusion is partial, but sometimes a sudden and inexplicable wave of sympathy occurs; a seer would say that an act of energy reciprocity has taken place.

"The warriors of a party combine in such a way that their relationship produces optimal results in the sense of gaining and accumulating power.

"It is difficult to find characteristic luminous bodies who are available for the task of the nagual; the usual is to find tonals deformed by the life of the world. But when a nagual is able

to integrate his party, the energy of his warriors will fuse. They sacrifice their individuality for a superior goal, and returning to

their previous isolation is no longer possible, it would only mean death for them. You may say that a party is not composed of individuals, but is rather a single, living organism, with capabilities that are not human."

Assembling A Party

"What awareness of the objective of (he party does each member have?"

"Full awareness. Each one of them knows the tales of power pertinent to their specialty, and they know that their function is part of a purpose that transcends them.

"The relationship between the Rule and the party is expressed in their tasks. For example, when the female warriors of a group receive the command of tracking energy in space until they find possible candidates for a new generation of sorcerers, they concentrate on that (ask as their avenue to freedom. They're not interested in anything else. If the discipline of that intent cracks, the result can be chaotic."

He gave me an example of the effect of a personal concern slipped inside a sorcerer's task.

"Soon after I started my apprenticeship, and although nobody asked me to do it, I offered to help Don Juan establish the new party. Every time a beautiful girl paid attention to me, I saw in her my complementary energetic being, and tried to 'sell her' to Don Juan, eulogizing her qualities.

"At first, the warriors took it as a joke. But little by little they got pissed off, and one day when I brought my new 'nagual woman' to introduce to them, I couldn't find them. They had all moved out of the house. To feel lonely helped me to recover my sobriety.

"The party is a self-conscious being that overcomes us thoroughly. To participate in its intent is something so exceptional that as soon as an apprentice glimpses its totality, his ego position just melts. That does not imply that he automatically becomes impeccable; for years, he will still have to make an effort to temper his

character and to extinguish his self-importance, as well as the obsession of power.

"Only the nagual man and woman have a total vision of the functioning of the party. Continuing the analogy, they would tell you that they are the nerve cells of the party; the units which direct the process of perpetuation. The other members serve as support, and they carry out the concrete tasks of duplicating the group.

"The work of the nagual is exhausting. He has to have perfect control of the arts of stalking and dreaming, he has to learn to see and to develop his capacity of manipulation to the maximum, and he has to serve as an example of sobriety in order to maintain the cohesion of the group. If they are allowed to be carried away by their emotions, the result is disintegration."

I asked him why.

"Because the party is an organism of critical mass. If any one of its components goes astray from the goal, the resulting dysfunction causes a collapse, and everything would have to be restarted. That is why the nagual is obliged to demand from his warriors that they give all of themselves, and he must distribute their tasks so that all of them can participate with optimism and trust, The oil of the party is the impeccability of its members, and its fuel the yearning for total freedom."

The Structure Of The Party

"How many warriors make up a group?"

"The normal structure of a party is quadripartite, that is, based on the number four, since the Rule has a pyramid form. Its formation and growth are carried out in accordance with that basic structure. As in the pyramids, the architecture of the group consists of a base with four corners, each corner made up of three warriors: One female dreamer, one female stalker, and one male assistant. The corners are connected to each other through messengers, and the nagual couple is above them all.

"The Rule manifests itself to a double man or woman by means of a vision, and they have to accept it to be considered naguals. Following that acceptance, the naguals are joined by their warriors little by little, always following the signs of the spirit. Their capacity to lead is natural and indisputable, because, being double, they reflect each one of the energetic types in their party.

"Naguals can be defined as a man and a woman of extraordinary energy, involved in an act of fertilization of an infinitely greater scope than anything within human recognition. As long as they remain together, they are usually presented in society as husband and wife.

"The ability of the nagual man is to find and use the most appropriate words to express things with accuracy, intellectual clarity, fluency, and beauty. Among seers of the lineage which Don Juan's group belonged to, the omen to occupy this position was to be dying. All their leaders, except me, were found under such conditions."

"Why was your case different?"

"Because, properly speaking, I am a surplus nagual. I didn't come to continue the lineage, but to seal it."

"And what is the Rule for the nagual woman?"

"The nagual woman is the light that guides all effort, the true mother. Normally, she leaves before the rest of the group and stays fluctuating between the first and the second attention, visiting the apprentices in dreams. She functions as a lighthouse, and if necessary she can return from the second attention to sow a new generation of seers.

"When it comes to warriors, they come in two bands, stalkers and dreamers. They have two kinds of functions: Portals, and guardians. The portals belong to the direction of the south. They are the strainer or filter through which apprentices must pass. They determine whether a warrior stays or leaves, and they have the main influence on how members of the team are provided. They are also the organizers of power meetings.

"The guardians are kind of an external version of the portals; there is a white one and a black one. They are in charge of watching over the smooth functioning of the group, which means they are alert to possible external attacks, and they also stand ready to solve any internal problems. Among the new seers, women are in charge of all these functions."

"Why is it that?"

"Because women have greater mobility and more energy than men. Practically the entire universe is feminine by nature, and teams of witches travel through it as if they were at home in their own house. That capacity to circulate without interference from the dark energy makes them the battery of the group."

"On the other hand, we men are detected at once, because our energy is bright, and betrays us. Also, since we were not made to give birth, we do not have a specialized organ for dreaming. Except for the nagual, the male elements of a party don't carry much sparkle."

"Nevertheless, the Rule dictates that there are four male warriors dedicated to organize, explore, and understand. For this purpose, they fix their assemblage points in very specific energetic locations. Their presence serves to stabilize the group, neutralizing the frequent explosions of power staged by the female warriors. If not for them, the structure would explode as soon as the women achieve some degree of efficiency. So the men function as anchors; they fix the group until a maximum of power is reached."

"Due to its form, Don Juan called the party 'the organization of the snake'. It is a concept that he inherited from the old seers, referring to the pattern of squares on the skin of the rattlesnake. He affirmed that the head of the animal, with its fixed and hypnotic eyes, represents the nagual couple. The chest corresponds to the warrior dreamers, whose function is to inhale visions and distribute them to the whole group. The stomach represents the stalkers, able to digest any conceivable situation. The tail is the assistants, who are in charge of giving mobility to the group. It is a very fluid disposition."

"Are there any parties which are organized differently?"

"The warriors are largely the result of the implacable manipulation of the nagual. I'm sure you can see how, after years under this constant pressure, the form of a group - including the particular hue adopted by the luminosity of each member - becomes very specific. This is why so many lineages of sorcerers exist. But all of them have, basically, the same kind of pyramid-shaped parties which I have described to you, since experience has shown that this is the most stable formula."

The Purpose Of The Rule

"What is the purpose of a party?"

"From the Eagle's point of view: To explore, to verify, and to expand the Rule. Each generation of warriors should leave their print on it, because the Rule is accumulative. The heritage of the lineage consists of a series of positions of the assemblage point, to which successive parties go adding their own acquisitions. It is normal that lineages make a 'journal' of incidents where the naguals note their discoveries."

"The basic interest of an organism is to reproduce itself. Therefore, one way of defining it would be to say that the Rule is the recipe for a reproductive process. What it seeks is the perpetuation of awareness, something which, beyond a certain point, cannot be accomplished through individual channels. The resources that each warrior personally acquires during his training are secondary achievements,

"From the sorcerers' point of view, the object of grouping themselves is to ensure their passage to another level of attention, since without energy mass there is no flight."

"Do you mean that solitary warriors don't have a chance?"

"No. What I'm saying is that a party can go further.

"Imagine that you live in a colony of gregarious caterpillars who are in a state of metamorphosis. Suddenly, one of the cocoons breaks open, and its resident leaves in a momentary explosion of light and color. The sensation you're left with is that the caterpillar disappeared. For the caterpillar itself, on the other hand, its true life as a butterfly will have begun. Now then: A solitary caterpillar is more likely to end up in the stomach of a bird.

"In the same way, the ulterior objective of warriors is the definitive jump to the third attention; the liberation from all forms of interpretation. The quantity of energy that is necessary for this can only be achieved by means of a special consensus of critical mass, in order to generate the necessary agreements to compact the energy.

"However, since many parties are not able to reach the completion of their energy, naguals have built an inhabitable oasis inside the second attention, an enormous edifice of intent in a remote region of dreaming, where seers go alone or in small groups. I call it 'the dome of intent', because its visible form is dome-shaped, but Don Juan preferred to call it 'the cemetery of the naguals'."

"Why did he call it that?"

"Because staying in that space to live implies the sorcerer's literal death. In a sense not at all allegorical, it is a cemetery. Although those who choose that destiny have achieved the expansion of awareness for an enormous period of time, they will have to do without it when the moment arrives.

"So, for many sorcerers, the immediate goal of the party is the dome of the naguals, in the hope of being able to use it as a transit port where they can accumulate provisions for a great expedition. To get there, it is not necessary that the whole group leave at the same time. Sometimes, warriors choose to go one by one. In that case, they can partially return, as long as the totality of the group's energetic structure has not been completed.

"As you can see, the challenges warriors are involved in during their human existence are barely the prelude; the really tremendous stuff comes later. Don't ask what they dedicate themselves to while they remain in that world; it would sound like a fairy tale to you. The important thing is: All their activities are governed by the Rule."

I commented that, keeping in mind the goal of the party, the Rule could be interpreted as the prehispanic equivalent of what other

cultures called 'divine laws', that is, a group of normative regulations designed for man's salvation.

He replied:

"It is not the same, because it does not come from a supreme being. The mechanism of the Rule is impersonal, it lacks kindness or compassion. It has no other objective than its own continuity.

"Allowing themselves to be seduced by the analogies, the ancient seers made the error of identifying the Rule with their particular interpretations, and wound up worshipping it and erecting temples in its honor. The new seers rejected all that. When they explored stalking, they dusted off the essence of sorcery and rediscovered the goal of total freedom, which does not resemble religious goals in any way. It erased in them the fascination for the human mold, but it had a secondary effect that I have already explained to you: The wild enthusiasm of the old seers was substituted by furtive and suspicious attitudes.

"In the end, the effect stalking had on the nagual parties was to betray their initial motives. In time, the goal of total freedom was reduced to rhetoric. Almost all the sorcerers of Don Juan's lineage preferred the flight to the second attention. With the exception of the nagual Julian Osorio, none of them wanted to be deprived of the adventure and ecstasy of visiting the dome of the naguals, constructed of intent, located on one of the stars of the constellation of Orion."

Three-Pronged Naguals

"The Rule is final, but its design and configuration are in constant evolution. But unlike evolutionists, who view the adaptations of life as a haphazard accumulation of genetic mutations, seers know there is nothing random about the Rule. They see how a command of the Eagle, in the form of a wave of energy, shakes the lineages of power from time to time, producing new stages in sorcery.

"A more exact way of describing it, is to assume that all possible variations of the Rule are contained in a womb of potential, and what changes over time is the degree of knowledge the sorcerers have of that totality, and what emphasis they put on particular portions of it. Such periods of change are recurrent, and they are represented by the number three."

"Why three?"

"Because the old Toltecs associated the number three with dynamics and renewal. They discovered that ternary formations - formations based on the number three - announce unexpected changes.

"The Rule dictates that, from time to time, a special kind of nagual will appear in the lineages; a nagual whose energy is not divided into four parts, but instead has only three compartments. Seers call them 'three-pronged naguals1."

I asked him how they were different from the others. He

answered:

"Their energy is volatile, they are always moving, and because of that they find it difficult to accumulate power. From the point of view of the lineage, their composition is faulty; they will never be true naguals. In compensation, they lack the timidity and

reservation that characterize the classic naguals, and they possess an unusual capacity to improvise and communicate.

"We can say that three-pronged naguals are like the cuckoo birds incubated in other birds' nests. They are opportunists, but they are necessary. Unlike the naguals of four points, whose freedom it is to pass unnoticed, those of three points are public personalities. They disclose secrets and cause fragmentation of the teachings, but without them, the lineages of power would have been extinguished a long time ago.

"Among the new seers, the Rule is that a nagual leaves a new party as a descendant. Some, due to their enormous energy surpluses, are able to help organizing a second or third generation of seers. For example, the nagual Elias Ulloa lived long enough to create his successor's party and to have an influence on the following one. But this does not mean a fork in the lineage; all those groups were part of the same transmission line.

"On the other hand, the three-pronged nagual is authorized to transmit his knowledge radially, which does lead to a diversification of lineages. His luminous cocoon has a disintegrating effect on the group, which breaks the lineal structure of transmission and foments a desire for change and action in warriors, and an active disposition to be involved with their fellow men."

"Was that what happened to you?"

"That's what happened. Due to my luminous disposition, I don't have any qualms about leaving kernels of knowledge behind, wherever I go. I know that I need an enormous quantity of energy to fulfill my task, and that I can only obtain it from masses. For that reason I am willing to broadcast the knowledge far and wide, and transform and redefine its paradigms."

The Portion Of The Rule For

The Three-Pronged Nagual

"As you know, my teacher became aware of the Rule for the three- pronged nagual when he tried to analyze certain anomalies in the new group. Apparently, I could not get in tune with the rest of the apprentices. Then he paid me sufficient attention to see that I masked my energy configuration."

"Do you mean that Don Juan's seeing had been mistaken?"

"Of course not! What was mistaken was his looking. To see is the final form of perception; there are no appearances, so it is not possible to be deceived. However, due to the pressure that he had exerted on me for years, my energy struggled to mold itself to his. That is common among apprentices. Since he was divided into four compartments, I also began to manifest a similar energetic weight in my actions.

"Once I was able to shake off his influence (it took me almost ten years of arduous work), we discovered something astonishing: My luminosity only had three compartments; it didn't correspond to an ordinary, modern person, who only has two, nor to a nagual. This discovery

caused a great commotion in the group of seers, since they all saw it as a portent of profound change for the lineage.

"Then Don Juan went back to the tradition of his predecessors, and dusted off a forgotten aspect of the Rule. He told me that the election of a nagual cannot in any way be considered as a personal whim, since it is the spirit who chooses the successor of a lineage at all times. Therefore, my energetic anomaly was part of a command. Faced with my urgent questioning, he assured me that a messenger would appear in due time and explain to me the function of my presence as a three-pronged nagual.

"Years later, during a visit to one of the rooms in the National

Museum of Anthropology and History, I observed a native dressed

in the old-fashioned Tarahumara costume, who seemed to have the most absorbing interest in one of the exhibition pieces. He examined it from all sides and demonstrated such a total concentration that it made me curious, and I went closer to look.

"When he saw me, the man spoke to me and began to explain the meaning of a group of excellent, painstaking drawings sculpted into the stone. Then, while I meditated on what he had told me, I remembered Don Juan's promise, and realized that this man had been an envoy from the spirit, who had passed on to me the portion of the Rule concerning the three-pronged nagual."

"And what does that portion say?"

"It affirms that, just as the party has an energy matrix of the number seventeen (two naguals, four female dreamers, four female stalkers, four male warriors, and three scouts), a lineage, which is formed by a succession of parties, also has a structure of power, of the number fifty-two. The Eagle's command is that every fifty-two generations of four-pointed naguals, there will appear a three-pronged nagual who serves as a cathartic action for the propagation of new four-point lineages.

"The Rule also says that the three-pronged naguals are destructive to the established order, because their nature is neither creative nor nurturing, and they have the tendency to enslave all those who surround them. It adds that, to achieve freedom, these naguals should do it alone, because their energy is not tuned to guide groups of warriors.

"Like everything in the world of energy, the block of fifty-two generations is divided into two parts; the first twenty-six concerning themselves with expansion and the creation of new lines, the rest oriented towards conservation and isolation. This pattern of behavior has been repeating itself millennium after millennium, so sorcerers know that it is part of the Rule. "As a result of the activities of a three-pronged nagual, the knowledge becomes widely known, and new cells of four-point

naguals are formed. From that starting point, lineages recapture the tradition of transmitting the teachings in a lineal form."

"How often do three-point naguals appear?"

"Approximately once per millennium. That is the age of my lineage."

The Task Of The Seers Of Today

"Upon verifying the Rule of the three-pronged nagual, Don Juan deduced that, inevitably, the time of a new breed of warriors was at hand; I have called them the modern seers."

"Are there any peculiarities in the luminous composition of those warriors?"

"No. In every era, man's energy pattern has been very homogeneous, so the organization of the party is the same. However, the warriors of today are experiencing a slide towards green in their luminosity, which means that they are recovering characteristics of the old seers. This is something unforeseen, although it is for sure covered by the Rule.

"The true difference between seers of the past and those of today is in their behavior. At the moment, we are not subjected to the same repressions as in previous eras, and therefore sorcerers have fewer restrictions. Clearly, this has a purpose: Popularization of the teaching.

"I have lived a moment of renewal. My task is to close the lineage of Don Juan with a golden key, and to open up possibilities for those who come later. That is why I have said that I am the last nagual of my lineage, not in an absolute sense, but in the sense of radical change."

At this point, Carlos took a break in his presentation and reminded me of a conversation we had when we first met.

At that time, I had asked him to tell me tales of power. He replied that he could not refuse what I was asking, but to hand over those stories without any directions would have been to trivialize them.

"I hope what you have seen during these years fulfills your expectations. I did what I could, considering your limitations as

well as mine. I know you have already begun to train your dreaming double, and that guarantees that you can continue by yourself; your double won't leave you alone until you arrive at your totality. The theoretical part is finished, and it is time to give you a last gift."

The tone of Carlos' voice as he spoke these words, somewhere between familiar and solemn, made me concentrate all my attention.

"The final teaching says that in connection with intent, every person, whoever it may be, who approaches the nagual, has his place inside the total context of the Rule. So you are not alone; sorcerers are expecting something from you."

"What?" I asked, a little confused. He

explained:

"All warriors have a task. Yours is to fulfill what the spirit told you to do; that is your path to power."

"And what is that task?"

"Well, your personal mission is something your benefactor will communicate to you some day. However, in accordance with the Rule of the three-pronged nagual, I am following a long-term strategy devised by Don Juan, which commits you to my teacher's intent.

"What is expected from you is that you say to those who surround you: 'You are free, you can fly by yourselves! You have the necessary information, what are you waiting for? Act impeccably, and see how energy finds a way.'

"Warn everyone that with the culmination of Don Juan's lineage, the knowledge is wide open. Each warrior is responsible for himself, and can provide himself with the minimum opportunity, which is to organize his own party."

PART IV

The World Of The Old Seers

Today

With the permission of the one who has no name, I proceed with my testimony to complete this account and present the truth in its entirety.

One day, very early in the morning, a phone call woke me up. It was Carlos and, frankly, he sounded bad. He said that he was in the Hotel Camino Real in Mexico City, and that he was very sick. He added that he had been unable to sleep that night, and had waited until dawn so that he could call me.

I asked him how I could help him.

He replied that he urgently needed a particular medicine specially prepared for him by an herbalist in a town nearby, and asked if I would go there and get it for him.

I was at his command. He gave me directions and the name of the person who would have the potion.

At that point, he made a comment which seemed odd to me, since it had nothing to do with what we were talking about:

"When Hernan Cortes arrived in Mexico, he gave the order to burn his ships. That was the magical act which guaranteed victory. For him, it meant he had to win, or perish; he had no other option. We should bear in mind that any undertaking could be our last."

He went on to say that he had a bad stomachache, and those plants were the only thing in the world that could alleviate his pain.

I didn't hesitate. Hanging up the phone, I was already on my way to Tepoztlan, a picturesque town clinging to a mountainside an hour's bus ride from Mexico City. My intention was to return with the package as soon as possible, to help Carlos with his pain.

Today, with the perspective I have gained after all these years, I understand what he meant when he said that any undertaking might be our last.

I got off the bus and went directly to the market. Walking down the street, I could not stop marveling at the beauty of the landscape. High up on the hill above the town one could see the pyramid of Tepozteco.

It was a sunny day and it took me just a few minutes to get to the center of town. In the market, I looked for the herbs section and asked for Don Eladio. Nobody seemed to know him, or maybe they didn't want to answer my questions.

I stood there without knowing what to do, until a middle-aged gentleman with indigenous features, dressed in white with a straw hat and sandals, asked how he could help me.

I replied that I was looking for Don Eladio, the herbalist, and that I came on behalf of Mr. José Cortes. His face lit up; with a great smile, he extended his hand to greet me and told me he was Eladio Zamora, and that he was at my service.

I told him that I had come for the medicine he had ordered.

He seemed not to know what I meant, but when I told him Mr. Jose Cortes was suffering from a strong stomachache, he reacted as if he had remembered something. In a dramatic tone, he told me that he knew what it was about, but that unfortunately he had been unable to gather the herb in question, and didn't have it available at that moment to prepare the beverage.

I was alarmed, since I knew what happened to those who failed in some task which Carlos had given them: They were simply discarded.

I asked Don Eladio if I could get the plant somewhere else. He shook his head.

"It is useless to look for it, nobody sells it here." I insisted that there must be some place where I could find it.

Seeing my despair, he told me that he could not go and get it at this moment, but maybe if I came back on the weekend...

I became very nervous and told him that if he would describe the plant to me and the place where it grew, I was willing to go and look for it on my own, to enable him to prepare the medicine.

Upon seeing my determination, Don Eladio consented, but warned me that getting to the place where the plant grew was tiring and dangerous.

"I am willing to do anything!" I exclaimed.

He seemed to appreciate my words, because he brought out an old botany book, and after leafing through the pages, he showed me a

drawing of the plant. He said that the only place where it grew was in a narrow canyon among the hills a good distance away, and explained how to get there.

I calculated that it would take me a couple of hours to reach the place, so I said goodbye immediately and was on my way.

The beauty of those places is overwhelming. I was filled with joy at the thought that warriors of ancient ages once traveled along those barren paths, thousands of years old.

The hill was further away than it had seemed. When I came to the narrow canyon, I entered it as best as I could among the tall grasses which were growing everywhere. The place in question is formed by the junction of two hills, where the water from recent rains accumulates in scattered puddles and flows in a slow, lazy stream.

I looked for the plant for a long time. I finally found it, but as I bent down to pick it, a strong blow hit me on the head, and I lost consciousness.

A penetrating scent woke me up. I was lying on a mat, on top of a pile of herbs. I looked around and discovered that I was in a rustic cabin. The floor was of stamped earth, and wooden beams darkened by smoke supported the tiled roof.

Near a clay oven where a fire was burning sat an old woman dressed in Indian clothes. I noticed that her skin was white.

Seeing that I was awake, she smiled and said:

"Well I'll be damned! Welcome back to the land of the living! For a while there I thought you were fucked!"

I didn't know what to say. I tried to move and felt a searing pain in my head; my whole body ached.

The old lady hurried closer to me and in an urgent voice ordered me not to move, since I was only alive by a miracle.

Judging by the pain I felt, I could well believe my condition was serious, and did as she told me.

I asked her what had happened to me.

She replied that she didn't know. She thought that I had been attacked by robbers who had beaten me up and left me for dead in the hills. Pointing at the clothes I was wearing, she said I was naked when she found me. At that moment I realized that I was dressed in a white robe embroidered with hummingbirds, like the ones indigenous women use.

The old lady introduced herself. She told me her name was Silvia Magdalena, that she was a devoted herbalist, and that she was healing my injuries.

She remarked that it was a stroke of luck that she had found me, laying as if thrown there in her path, bleeding and almost dead. She added that I had already spent three days unconscious, and that in a couple of days I could get up.

Her words startled me. I wanted to get up again, but I was so weak that I fell back on the mat.

I told her how shocked I was by what she told me, and in a moaning voice explained how I had come there in search of some herbs for a friend, but that I had failed in my task, and because of that I would surely never see him again.

Listening to my complaining, she started to laugh. I didn't understand why.

Seeing my confused expression, she said:

"Don't mind me! I'm just given to fits of laughter."

The following days were the strangest of my life. Every day, I had the opportunity to study how Dona Silvia cured her patients, who were suffering from all kinds of illnesses. When I began to recover a little from my injuries, she even asked me to help her. In that way, without really realizing it, I began working as a healer.

In time, I learned everything connected to the art. She taught me how to clean people's energy, and to make cures for various kinds of illnesses, as well as a lot of chiropractic techniques - and an immense number of tea recipes.

I soon understood that Dona Silvia Magdalena was a witch, and that I had been taken on as her pupil. The simple fact of being near her was a true delight for me. The humor and drama in everything she did were magnificent, and they reminded me of Carlos' descriptions of his teachers.

I spent almost three months on that mat. The most difficult part was in the beginning, when I could not move and the healer's assistants had to come and take me to the bathroom. That the bathroom was outside the house didn't make the situation any easier.

One day, when I was much better, Dona Silvia told me that at the next full moon, there would be an initiation ceremony for me. I had already learned much of her world, and accepted the invitation as a true honor.

She added: "All I can say is that those who participate in these ceremonies are changed forever, and they can never be the same again. There is no return."

As usual, I didn't understand what she meant. She always used strange expressions.

It was around nine in the evening when she asked me to come with her. We walked in the darkness for nearly an hour, until we arrived at a place where some people sat around a bonfire. When we came closer, she made a gesture indicating that I should sit down on a particular rock.

The place of the meeting was near a waterfall; I could hear the roar of it, and felt a humid air wafting up to where we were.

The fire gave enough light to see the other participants. It was a group of fifteen people, most of them young, although there were some old ones like Dona Silvia. I felt a little uncomfortable and apart, because it seemed that I was the only new one present.

I had never been to a ceremony of this kind, and didn't know how to proceed or what was in store; this made me very apprehensive. The participants solemnly chanted something that I could not understand, but it filled me with an indefinable yearning.

We waited for a while, and then a man appeared out of the darkness dressed in the skin of a coyote. He approached the fire, dancing in a weird way. He wore the animal's head as a mask, so I could not see his face. From his manners and movements, I immediately understood that he was a sorcerer.

Without saying a word, the man came up to me. With a very skilled gesture, he grabbed my left hand and pressed it against his side with his arm while turning around. I felt a sharp pain between my fingers and wanted to retract my hand, but he held it in a strong grip. When he released me, I saw that he had made a cut between my middle and ring fingers. Blood was flowing freely from the cut.

I was shocked; I would have run away if I hadn't been paralyzed by terror.

Then the sorcerer squeezed my hand to force out more blood, and poured a little on the ground, some on the fire, and the rest in a clay vessel.

Next, he ordered me to get up, take my clothes off, and keep my eyes closed. There was such a force and authority in his words that I obeyed.

For a long time, the sorcerer prayed and sang around me. Then I felt him blowing on me, and rubbing fragrant herbs all over my body. Finally, he cleansed me with the fire of a torch or something like that.

At one point, I felt a hot and viscous substance being spilled on my head. I was intensely curious, but I didn't dare to disobey him and look.

Finally, he ordered me to open my eyes. What a shock: My body was covered with blood! On a rock in front of me, I saw the headless body of a small, black, male goat. I wanted to protest, but the solemnity of the situation stopped me.

Then they told me to go and clean myself; so I did. I walked nude in front of them all and went to the waterfall. The water was cold, but my body was burning hot, and the cold water felt very good while it washed away the red blood covering my body.

When I came out of the water, somebody was waiting for me with a towel so I could dry myself off. They gave me my clothes and I got dressed, still stunned by these unexpected events. Then I returned to take my place by the fire.

Just as I sat down, those gathered in the circle began to pass around some baskets filled with peyote buttons. Each one took a button and passed the basket to the left. I thought about refusing it, but there was no reason to; I had already made my decision, so I said to myself: "So what?", and surrendered joyfully to participate in the ceremony.

We were eating peyote and singing for most of the night.

At one point, when the effect of the plant had begun to fade, the sorcerer came up to me, stopped in front of me, and took off the mask. I almost fainted with fear. I could have sworn he was the same ghost that I had seen in the crypt of the cathedral!

A chill ran down my back and I wanted to scream, but the sorcerer spoke to me in a strange voice; it was very rough or dry somehow. He told me that his name was Melchor Ramos, and that I was welcome among them.

I didn't know what to answer; I just nodded.

I was in a very special state of awareness, and the clarity I enjoyed at that moment was not customary for me in my daily life.

Near dawn, the assistants made an enormous spiral with embers from the fire. Don Melchor came to me and told me I should look " at the spiral until Xolostoc (the devil) revealed himself to me.

With growing apprehension, I did what he bade me, saying to myself that all this was merely symbolic. But after a moment of staring at the embers, I became dizzy and felt as if I was falling through a tunnel, towards a total blackness, where I could no longer recognize myself as me.

Since that night, I have never returned to the world I came from. I understand now everything that has happened to me, and I am thankful for my fabulous good luck which brought me to these magnificent beings who are my teacher and my benefactor.

