

Magical Blend #14 - 1985
Evasive Mysteries - Part One

[This article appeared in Magical Blend magazine in 1985. The interview was conducted entirely in Spanish probably around 1980-81 and published in an Argentinian magazine. The translator that created this English version apparently introduced numerous misspellings and strange phraseology which is preserved here.]

By Graciela Corvalan, translated by Larry Towler

Magical Blend Magazine Issue #14

Carlos Castaneda is world renowned as an author of seven best selling books on the Toltec system of sorcery. Some give him credit as being the crucial catalyst of mainstream awareness of metaphysics that has grown so in recent decades. Graciela Corvalan Ph.D. is a professor of Spanish at Webster College, in St Louis, Missouri. Graciela is currently working on a book consisting of a series of interviews with mystical thinkers in the Americas. A while back she wrote a letter to Carlos Castaneda asking for an interview. One night she received a phone call from Carlos accepting her request and explaining that he had a friend who collected his mail for him while he was away traveling. Upon his return he always reached into the mail sacks and pulled out two letters which he then acted upon. Hers had been one of the most recent two. He explained he was excited to be interviewed by her for she was not a member of the established press. He arranged to meet Graciela in California on the UCLA campus. He asked that the interview first be published in Spanish which Graciela has done, in the Argentinian magazine, Mutantian. Now we are honored to release an English translation. Graciela has obviously succeeded in capturing a flash of lightning over a desert night and showing us amazing insights into Carlos Castaneda the Toltec Seer!

[Beginning of Corvalan Interview - Part 1]

At around 1:00 pm, my friend and I set course for the campus of UCLA. We had somewhat more than two hours of travel.

Following Castaneda's directions, we arrived without difficulty at the guard shack at the entrance to the parking lot of UCLA.

It was about quarter to four.

We stationed ourselves in a more or less shady place.

At exactly four o'clock, I looked up and saw him coming toward the car:

Castaneda was wearing blue jeans and a pale cream colored open-collared jacket without pockets. I got out of the car and hastened to meet him.

After the greetings and conventional courtesies, I asked him if he would permit me to use a tape recorder. We had one in the car in case he permitted us. No, it's better not to, he answered with a shrug of his shoulders. We showed him the way to the car to get the notes, notebooks and books.

Loaded with books and papers, we let Castaneda drive. He knew the route well.

Over there, he said, pointing with his hand, there are some beautiful river banks.

From the beginning, Castaneda established the tone of the conversation and the themes which we were to deal with.

I also realized that it wasn't necessary to have all those questions that I had so laboriously worked

out.

As I had anticipated from his telephone call, he wanted to speak to us about the project he was involved in, and the importance and seriousness of his investigations.

The conversation was conducted in Spanish, a language that he manages with fluidity and a great sense of humor. Castaneda is a master in the art of conversation.

We spoke for seven hours. The time passed without his enthusiasm or our attention weakening. As he gradually became more comfortable, he made more use of typically Argentinian expressions so as to make use of his coastal ways such as a friendly gesture to us that we are all Argentinian.

It must be mentioned that although his Spanish is correct, it's evident that his language is English.

He made abundant use of expressions and words in English for those which we give the equivalent of in Spanish.

That his prime language would be English is manifested also in the syntactic structure of his phrases and sentences.

All that afternoon Castaneda strove to maintain the conversation on a level that wasn't intellectual.

Even though he has obviously read a lot and knows the different currents of thought, at no time did he establish comparisons with other traditions of the past or the present. He transmitted to us the Toltec teachings by means of material images that, precisely for that reason, hindered their being interpreted speculatively. In this way Castaneda wasn't only obedient to his teachers but totally faithful in the route he has chosen- he didn't want to contaminate his teaching with anything extraneous to it.

Shortly after meeting us, he wanted to know the reasons for our interest in knowing him.

He already knew about my possible outline and the projected book of interviews I was planning. Beyond all professionalism, we insisted on the importance of his books that had influenced us and many others so much.

We had a profound interest in knowing the font of his teaching. Meanwhile, we arrived at the banks and, in the shade of the trees, sat down. Don Juan gave me everything, he began to say, when I met him I had no other interest than anthropology, but upon encountering him I changed. And what has happened to me I wouldn't change for anything!

Don Juan was present with us. Every time Castaneda mentioned or remembered him we felt his emotion. He told us that, from Don Juan, he had learned that there was one totality of **exquisite** intensity capable of giving himself everything in every present moment. Give your all in each moment is his principal, his rule, he said. That which Don Juan is like can't be explained and is rarely comprehended, it simply is.

In The Second Ring of Power Castaneda records one special characteristic of Don Juan and Don Genaro, that which all others lack. There he writes: None of us is **disposed** to lend to another **undivided** attention in the way that Don Juan and Don Genaro did.

The Second Ring of Power had left me full of questions; the book interested me a lot, especially after the second reading, but I had heard unfavorable commentaries. I had certain doubts myself. I told him that I believed that I had enjoyed Journey to Ixtlan best without really knowing why. Castaneda listened to me and answered my words with a gesture which seemed to say, And me, what do I have to do with the taste of all? I continued speaking, looking for reasons and explanations.

Maybe my preference for Journey to Ixtlan is because of the love I perceived, I asserted. Castaneda made a face. He didn't like the word love. It's possible that the term might have connotations of romantic love, **sentimentality**, or weakness for him. Trying to explain myself, I insisted that the final scene of Journey to Ixtlan is **bulging** with intensity. There, said Castaneda. Yes, he would agree with that last statement. Intensity, yes, he said, that's the word.

Emphasizing the same book, I demonstrated to him that some scenes seemed to me definitely **grotesque**. I couldn't find justification for them. Castaneda was in agreement with me. Yes, the behavior of those women is monstrous and grotesque, but that vision was necessary to be able to enter into action, he said.

Castaneda needed that shock.

Without an **adversary** we are nothing, he continued. The adversary belongs to human form. Life is war, is struggle. Peace is an anomaly. Referring to **pacifism** he qualified it as **monstrosity** because, according to him, men, are beings of success and struggles.

Without being able to restrain myself I told him that I couldn't accept pacifism as a monstrosity. What about Ghandi? I asked. How do you see Ghandi, for example?

Ghandi? he responded to me, Ghandi is not a pacifist. Ghandi is one of the most tremendous fighters that have existed. And what a fighter!

It was then that I understood the very special value that Castaneda gives to words. The pacifism that he had made reference to couldn't have been a pacifism of weakness; that of those who don't have enough guts to be, and consequently do something else, that of those who do nothing because they don't have objectives or energy in life; that pacifism reflects a completely self-indulgent and **hedonistic** attitude.

With a grand gesture which would include all of society without values, will, or energy, he replied, All drugged out... yes, **hedonists!**

Castaneda didn't clarify those concepts, and we didn't ask him to. I had understood that part of the **aesthetic** of the warrior was to free himself from the human nature, but the unusual comments of Castaneda had filled me with confusion. Little by little, however, I was getting to know that being, beings of success and struggles is the first level of the relationship. That is the raw material where they part. Don Juan, in the books, always referred to the good tone of a person. There begins the learning and one passes to another level.

You can't pass to the other side without losing the human form, said Castaneda.

Insisting about other aspects of his book that hadn't made themselves clear to me, I asked him about the hollows that had remained with people by the simple act of having reproduced.

Yes, said Castaneda, there are differences between people who have had children and those who haven't. To pass on tiptoes in front of the eagle, you need to be whole. A person with 'hollows' can't pass.

He will explain to us the metaphor of the eagle a little later. For the moment I will pass by this almost without mentioning it because the focus of our attention was on another theme.

How do you explain the attitude of Dona Soledad with Pablito and that of la Gorda with her daughters? I wanted to know insistently. Taking from the children that edge which at birth they take from us was, in large measure, something inconceivable for me.

Castaneda agreed that he still doesn't have it all systematized. He insisted, still in the differences that exist between people who have reproduced and those who haven't.

Don Genero is crazy! Crazy! Don Juan, in a different way, is a serious crazy man. Don Juan goes slowly but arrives far away. In the end, the two of them arrive...

I, like Don Juan, he continued, have hollows; that is to say, I have to follow the route. The Genaros, on the other hand, have another model.

The Genaros, for example, have a special edge that we don't have. They are more nervous and of rapid motion...they are very **fickle**, nothing detains them.

Those who like la Gorda and I have had children have other characteristics that compensate for that loss. One is more settled and, although the road might be long and arduous, one arrives also. In general those who have had children know how to take care of others. It doesn't mean that people without children don't know how, but it's different...

In general one doesn't know what one is doing; one is unconscious of actions and later pays for it. I didn't know what I was doing, he exclaimed, referring, without a doubt, to his own personal life.

At birth, I took everything from my father and mother, he said. They were all **bruised**! To them I had to return that edge that I had taken from them.

Now I have to **recoup** the edge that I lost.

It would seem that these hollows that have to be closed, have to do with biological **adornment**.

We wanted to know if to have hollows is something **irreparable**.

No, he responded, one can be cured.

Nothing is **irrevocable** in life.

It's always possible to return what doesn't belong to us and recoup what is ours.

This idea of recovery is coherent with a path of learning walk in which it doesn't **suffice** to know or practice one or more techniques but that requires an individual and profound transformation of being. It relates to everything- a coherent system of life with concrete and precise objectives.

After a short silence I asked him if The Second Ring of Power had been translated in Spanish.

According to Castaneda, a Spanish publishing house had the right, but he wasn't sure if the book had come out or not.

The translation into Spanish was done by Juan Tovar, who is a good friend of mine.

Juan Tovar used the notes in Spanish that Castaneda himself had furnished him, notes that some critics have put in doubt.

The translation into Portuguese seems to be very beautiful Yes, said Castaneda.

This translation is based on the translation into French.

Really, it's very well done.

In Argentina, his first two books have been banned.

It seems that the reason given was the drug affair.

Castaneda didn't know.

Why he asked us without waiting for our answer.

I imagine it's the work of the 'Mother Church'.

At the beginning of our conversation, Castaneda mentioned something about the Toltec teaching.

Also in The Second Ring of Power it insists in the Toltecs and in being a Toltec.

What does it mean to be a Toltec I asked him.

According to Castaneda, the word Toltec constitutes a wide meaning.

It is said that someone is a Toltec in the same way that it can be said that one is a Democrat or a philosopher.

In the way he uses it, this word doesn't have anything to do with its anthropological meaning.

From the anthropological point of view the word makes reference to an Indian culture of the center and south of Mexico that was already extinct at the time of the conquest and colonization of America by Spain.

Toltec is one who knows the mysteries of watching and dreaming.

All of them are Toltecs.

It deals with a small group that has known how to maintain alive a tradition from more than 3,000 years B.C.

As I was working on mystic thought and had particular interest in establishing the fountain and the place of origin of the distinct traditions, I insisted, Do you believe that the Toltec tradition offers teaching that would be peculiar to America?

The Toltec nation maintains alive a tradition, that is, without a doubt, peculiar to America.

Castaneda asserted that it is possible that the early Americans could have brought something upon crossing the Bering Straits, but all this was so many thousands of years ago that for the moment there are nothing more than theories.

In Stories of Power, Don Juan talks to Castaneda about the **wizards** about those men of knowledge that the conquest and colonization of the white man couldn't destroy because they didn't know about their existence nor notice all the incomprehensible ideas of their world.

Who forms the Toltec nation? Do they work together? Where do they do it? I asked.

Castaneda answered all of my questions.

He is now in charge of a group of young people that lives in the area of Chiapas, in the south of Mexico.

They all moved to that area due to the fact that the woman who now teaches them was located there.

Then... you returned?

I felt **impelled** to ask him to remember the last conversation between Castaneda and the little sisters at the end of The Second Ring of Power.

Did you return right away like the Gorda asked you to?

No, I didn't return right away, but I did return, he answered me laughing.

I returned to continue a task which I can't renounce.

The group consists of about 14 members.

Even though the basic nucleus is 8 or 9 people, all are indispensable in the task that each does.

If each one is sufficiently impeccable, a large number of people can be helped.

Eight is a magical number, he said at one moment.

Also he insisted that the Toltec isn't saved alone but that he goes with the basic nucleus.

Those who remain are indispensable in continuing and maintaining alive the tradition.

It is not necessary that the group be big, but each one of those who are involved in the task is definitely necessary for the total.

La Gorda and I are responsible for the arrivals.

Well... really I am the responsible one but she helps me intimately in this task, explained Castaneda.

He spoke to us later about the members of the group that we knew from his books.

He told us that Don Juan was a Yaqui Indian, from the state of Sonora.

Pablito, on the other hand, was a Mixteco Indian, Nestor was Mazatecan (from Mazatlan, in the province of Sinaloa), and Benigno was Tzotzil. He stressed several times that Josefina was not Indian but was Mexican and that one of her grandparents was of French origin. La Gorda, as were Nestor and Don Genaro, was Maytec.

When I met La Gorda she was an immense heavy woman brutalized by life, he said. None of those who knew her can today imagine that she now is the same person as before.

We wanted to know in what language he communicated with all the people of the group, and what was the language that they generally used among themselves. I reminded him that in his books there are references to some Indian languages.

We communicate in Spanish because it's the language we all speak, he responded. Besides, neither Josefina nor the Toltec woman are Indians.

I only speak a little in the Indian language. Single phrases like greetings and some other expressions. I don't know enough to maintain a conversation. Taking advantage of his pause I asked him if the task which they are doing is accessible to all men or if it deals with something for only a few. As our questions began to point at discovering the relevancy of the Toltec teaching and the value of the experience of the group for the rest of humanity, Castaneda explained to us that each one of the members of the group has specific tasks to perform whether in the Yucatan zone, in other areas of Mexico, or in other places.

Performing tasks one discovers a large number of things that are directly applicable to concrete situations of daily life. doing tasks one learns a lot.

The Genaros, for example, have a musical band with which they go through all the places of the frontier. You will imagine that they see and are in contact with many people. You always have the possibility to transmit knowledge.

It always helps. It helps with one word, with one little insinuation... each one, faithfully performing his task, does it. All humans can learn. All have the possibility to live as warriors.

Any person can undertake the task of warrior. The only requirement is to want to do it with an unshakeable desire; that is to say, one has to be unshakeable in the desire to be free. The way isn't easy. We constantly seek excuses and try to escape. It's possible that the mind obtains it but the body feels everything... the body learns rapidly and easily.

The Toltec can't waste energy in foolishness, he continued.

I was one of those persons who can't be without friends... I can't even go to the movies alone. Don Juan in a resolute moment told him that he had to abandon all and, particularly, separate himself from all those friends with whom he had nothing in common.

For a long time he resisted the idea until finally he got involved.

One time, returning to Los Angeles, I got out of the car a block before arriving home and telephoned. Naturally on that day, as always, my house was full of people. I asked one of my friends to prepare a satchel with some things and bring it to where I was. Also I told her that the rest of the things- books, records, etc.- could be distributed among them. It's clear that my friends didn't believe me and took everything as borrowed, clarified Castaneda.

The act of getting rid of the library and records is like cutting off everything in the past, a whole world of ideas and emotions.

My friends believed that I was crazy and kept hoping that I would return from my craziness. I didn't see them in about twelve years, he concluded. After twelve years passed, Castaneda would meet again with them. He first looked for one of his friends who put him in contact with the rest of them. They then planned to meet, and get together to eat dinner. That day they had a good time; they ate a lot and their friends got drunk.

To find myself with them after all those years was my way of showing my gratitude for the friendship that they had offered me before, said Castaneda Now all are grown. They all have their families, spouses, children... It was necessary, nevertheless, that I thank them. Only in that way could I definitely terminate with them and end a stage of my life.

It is possible that Castaneda's friends don't understand anything he is doing, but the fact that he wanted to thank them was something very beautiful.

Castaneda didn't pretend anything with them. He sincerely thanked them for their friendship, and in doing so, freed himself internally from all that past. We then spoke of love, of that often mentioned love. He related to us several anecdotes about his Italian grandfather, always so lovesick, and about his father, so Bohemian, he. Oh, love! Love! he repeated several times. All his commentaries tended to destroy the ideas that one commonly has about love.

It cost me a lot to learn, he continued. I was also very lovesick. Don Juan had to work hard to make me understand that I had to cut off certain relationships.

The way in which I finally cut off with one was the following. I invited her to dinner and we met in a restaurant. During the dinner the same thing happened as always. There was a big fight and she yelled at me and insulted me. At last I asked her if she had any money. She answered that she had.

I took advantage of that to tell her that I had to go to the car to look for my wallet or something like that. I got up and didn't go back. Before leaving her, I wanted to be sure that she had enough money to take a taxi home. Since then I haven't seen her.

You aren't going to believe me, but the Toltecs are very **ascetic**, [ascetic- Someone who practices self denial as a spiritual discipline] he insisted. Without doubting his word I commented that that idea couldn't be deduced from The Second Ring of Power. On the contrary, I stressed. I believe that in your book many scenes and attitudes present confusion.

How do you think I was going to say that clearly? he answered me. I couldn't say that the relations between them were pure because not only would nobody have believed me but nobody would have understood me.

For Castaneda, we live in a very **bustful** society. Of all that we had been speaking that afternoon, the majority hadn't been understood. It's that the same Castaneda is seen obligated to adapt to certain **exigencies** of the publishers who, at the time, would strive to satisfy the tastes of the reading public.

The people are into another thing, continued Castaneda. The other day, for example, I entered a bookstore here in Los Angeles and I began to leaf through the magazines on the counter.

I found that there was a large amount of publications with photos of **nude** women... many also with men. I don't know what to tell you. In one of the photos there was a man fixing an electric cable while high on a ladder. He had on his protective helmet and a large belt full of tools.

That was all. The rest was naked. Ridiculous! Something like that can't be possible! A woman is graceful... but, a man! As means of explanation he added that women have a lot of experience due to their long history in that type of thing. A role like that has no room for **improvisation**.

This is the first time I have heard of the idea that the behavior of women isn't improvised; it is something totally new for me, I responded. After listening to Castaneda, we were convinced that, for the Toltec, sex represents an immense **draining** away of energies that is needed for other tasks. His insistence is therefore understood about the totally **ascetic** relations that members of the group maintain.

In the point of view of the world, the life that the group carries and the relationships they maintain are something totally unacceptable and unheard of.

That which I tell them isn't believable. It took me a long time to comprehend it, but I have finally been able to verify it.

Castaneda had told us earlier that when a person reproduces he loses a special edge. It appears that that edge is a force that children take from their parents by the mere act of birth. This hollow that remains with a person is that which must be filled or recovered. You have to recover the force which you have lost.

He also made us understand that a prolonged sexual relationship of a couple ends with a decline. In a relationship differences surge up which make certain characteristics of one or the other progressively rejected. In consequence, for reproduction, it is selected from the other part that which one likes, but there is no guarantee that that which is chosen is necessarily the best. In the point of view of reproduction, he commented, the best is at random.

Castaneda strove to explain to us these concepts better, but had to confess again that they are themes which he himself doesn't have clear yet.

Castaneda came to us describing a group whose requirements, for the average person, were extreme. We were very interested in knowing where all that vigor came from What is the sole objective of the Toltec? We wanted to know the sense of what Castaneda was telling us. What is the objective that you pursue?

We insisted on bringing the question to a personal level.

The objective is to leave the living world; to leave with all that one is but with nothing more than what one is. The question is not to take anything nor leave anything. Don Juan left completely from the world. Don Juan doesn't die because the Toltecs don't die. In The Second Ring of Power, La Gorda instructs Castaneda with respect to the **dichotomy** wizard-tonal.

The domain of the second attention is only achieved after the warriors sweep totally the surface of the table... this second attention makes the two attentions form a unity and this unity is the totality of oneself.

In the same book, La Gorda says to Castaneda, when the wizards learn to 'dream,' they tie together their two attentions and, therefore, there is no need for the center to push out... sorcerers don't die...

I don't want to say that we don't die. We are nothing, we are **nincompoops**, stupid; we aren't either here nor there. They, on the other hand, have their attentions so united that maybe they never die.

According to Castaneda, the idea that we are free is an illusion and an absurdity. He pushed to make us understand that common sense deceives us because ordinary perception only tells us a part of the truth.

Ordinary perception doesn't tell us all the truth. There has to be more than a mere passing through the earth, of only eating and reproducing, he said vehemently.

With a gesture I interpreted as alluding to the unfeelingness of all and the immense tediousness of life in its everyday boredom, he asked us,...

What is all this that surrounds us? Common sense would be that accord to which we have arrived behind a long educative process that imposes on us ordinary perception as the only truth. Precisely. The art of the wizard, he said, consists of bringing learning to discover and destroy that perceptive prejudice.

According to Castaneda, Edmund Husserl is the first one from the West who conceives of the possibility of suspending judgment.

In Ideas for a pure phenomenology and a phenomenological philosophy (1913) Husserl dealt thoroughly with the era or phenomenological reduction. The phenomenological method doesn't deny but simply puts into parentheses those elements that sustain our ordinary perception.

Castaneda considers that phenomenology offers him the theoretical methodological framework to comprehend the teaching of Don Juan. For phenomenology, the act of knowing depends on intention and not on perception.

Perception always varies according to history, that is to say, according to the subject with knowledge acquired and immersed in a determined tradition. The most important rule of the phenomenological method is that of toward the same things.

The task with which Don Juan fulfilled me, he insisted, was that of breaking, little by little, the perceptive prejudices until arriving at a total **rupture**.

Phenomenology suspends judgment and is limited to the description of pure intentional acts. So, for example, I construct the object 'house.' The phenomenological reference is minimal. The 'intention' is what transforms reference into something concrete and singular.

Phenomenology, without a doubt, has, for Castaneda, a simple methodological value. Husserl never transcended the theoretical and, as a consequence, he didn't touch the human being in his life in all his days.

For Castaneda, the most the western man-the European man-has arrived to is the political man.

This political man would be the epitome of our civilization. Don Juan, he said, with his teaching is opening the door for another much more interesting man: a man who still lives in a magical world or universe.

Meditating about this idea of the political man a book by Eduardo Spranger named Forms of Life came to my memory, in which it says that the life of the political man is interwoven of relationships of power and rivalry. The political man is the man of dominion whose power controls as much of the concrete reality of the world as the beings that inhabit it.

The world of Don Juan, on the other hand, is a magical world populated with entities and forces.

The admirability of Don Juan, said Castaneda, is that even though in the world of days he appears to be crazy, nobody is capable of perceiving him. To the world, Don Juan offers a face that is necessarily temporal... one hour, one month, sixty years. Nobody would be able to catch him off guard!

In this world Don Juan is impeccable because he always knew that what is here is only momentary and that which comes after... well... a beauty! Don Juan and Don Genaro intensely loved beauty.

The perception and conception which Don Juan has of reality and time are undoubtably very distinct from ours. If on the level of daily life Don Juan is always impeccable, this doesn't prevent you from knowing that from this side all is definitely fleeting.

Castaneda continued describing a universe polarized between two extremes: the right side and the left side. The right side would correspond to the tonal and the left side to the wizard.

In Stories of Power, Don Juan explains extensively to Castaneda about those two halves of the bubble of perception. He says that the last duty of the teacher consists of tediously cleaning a part of the bubble, and then reorganizing all that there is on the other side.

The teacher is occupied in this hammering away at learning without pity until all his vision of the world stays in one half of the bubble. The other half, that which has remained clean, can therefore be reclaimed by something which the wizards call will.

To explain all this is very difficult because at this level words are totally inadequate. Precisely, the left part of the universe implies the absence of words, and without words we cannot think. There are only actions. In that other world, said Castaneda, the body acts.

The body doesn't need words to understand.

In the magical universe- as it's called- of Don Juan, certain entities exist that are called allies or fleeting shadows. These can be captured a number of times. For this kind of capture a large number of explanations have been sought, but, according to Castaneda, there is no doubt that these phenomena depend principally on the human anatomy. The important thing is to arrive at an understanding that there is a whole gamut of explanations that can give reasons for these fleeting shadows.

I asked him, then, about that knowing with the body that he speaks of in his books. Is it that, for you, the whole body is an organ of knowledge? I inquired.

Sure! The body knows, he responded to me. As an example, Castaneda told us of the many possibilities of that part of the leg that goes from the knee to the ankle where a memory center could be seated. It would appear that you can learn to use the body to capture those fleeting shadows.

The teaching of Don Juan transforms the body into an electronic scanner, he said, looking for an adequate word in Spanish to compare the body to an electronic telescope. The body would have the possibility to perceive reality at distinct levels which, in their time, would reveal

configurations of material also distinct.

It was evident that for Castaneda the body had possibilities of movement and perception to which the majority of us are not accustomed. Standing up and pointing to the foot and the ankle, he spoke to us of the possibilities of that part of the body and of the little that we know about all of this.

In the Toltec tradition, he affirmed, the apprentice is trained in the development of those possibilities. At this level Don Juan begins to construct.

Meditating on these words of Castaneda, I thought about the parallel with Tantric Yoga and the distinct centers or chakras through which the ritualist comes to awakening by means of certain ritual practices.

In the book *The Hermetic (impenetrable) Circle* by Miguel Serrano one reads that the chakras are centers of **conscience**. In the same book, Karl Jung refers to a conversation that Serrano had with a Pueblo Indian chief named Ochwian Bianco or Lake of the Mountain.

He explained to me his impression of the whites-always so agitated, always looking for something, aspiring to something... According to Ochwian Bianco, the whites were crazy; only crazy people affirm thinking with the head.

This affirmation of the Indian chief produced great surprise in me and I asked him what he thought with. He answered me that he thought with the heart. (Miguel Serrano, *The Impenetrable Circle*, Buenos Aires: Ed. Kier, 1978) The path of knowledge of the warrior is long, and requires total dedication. The warrior has a concrete objective and a very pure incentive.

What is the objective? I insist. It seems that the objective consists in passing consciously to the other side through the left flank of the universe. You have to try to come as near as possible to the eagle and strive to escape it without it devouring us. the objective, he said, is to leave on tiptoe by the left hand side of the eagle.

I don't know if you know, he continued, seeking the way to clarify for us the image, that there is an entity that the Toltecs call the eagle. The visionary sees it as an immense blackness that extends to infinity; it is an immense blackness that lightning crossed. For that reason it is called the eagle: it has black wings and back, and its chest is luminous.

The eye of the entity isn't a human eye. The eagle doesn't have pity. Everything that is alive is represented in the eagle.

That entity encloses all- the beauty that man is capable of creating as well as all the **bestiality** that isn't the human being properly said. That which is appropriately human in the eagle is immensely small in comparison with all the rest. The eagle is excessively mass, bulk, blackness... in front of that little which is proper in a human being.

The eagle attracts all life force that is ready to disappear because it is nourished from that energy. The eagle is like an immense magnet that picks up all those beams of light that are the vital energy of that which is dying.

While Castaneda told us all this, his hand and fingers imitated, like hammers, the head of an eagle pecking space with an insatiable appetite. I only tell you that which Don Juan and the others say. They are all wizards and witches! he exclaimed. They are all involved in a metaphor that is incomprehensible for me.

What is 'the master' of man? What is it that claims us? he asked. I listened attentively and stopped talking because he had entered a terrain in which questions were possible.

The master of us can't be a man, he said. It seems that the Toltecs call master the mold of a man.

Everything-- plants, animals and human beings --have a mold. The mold of man is the same for all human beings. My mold and yours, he continued explaining, is the same, but in each one it is manifested and acted on in a distinct form according to the development of the person.

Dividing the words of Castaneda, we interpreted that the human mold is that which doesn't reunite, that which unifies the force of life. The human form, on the other hand, could be that which impedes us from seeing the mold. It seems that while the human form isn't lost, we are, and this impedes us from changing.

In *The Second Ring of Power*, La Gorda instructs Castaneda about the human mold and the human form. In that book, the form is described as a luminous entity and Castaneda remembers that Don Juan described it as, the fount and origin of man. La Gorda, thinking about Don Juan, remembers that he told her that, if we arrive at having sufficient personal power we will be able to glimpse the pattern although we are not wizards; and that when this occurs we will say that we have seen God. She told me that if we call it God, it would be fit because the mold is God.

(The translation and the italicization are ours.)

Many times that afternoon we returned to the theme of the human form and the mold of man. Surrounding the theme from distinct angles, each time it was becoming more evident that the human form is that hard shell of the person.

That human form, he said, is like a towel that covers one from the armpits to the feet. Behind that towel there is a bright candle that is being consumed until it goes out. When the candle goes out, it is because one has died. Then, the eagle comes and devours it.

Seers, continued Castaneda are those beings capable of seeing the human being as a luminous egg. Inside of that sphere of light is a lit candle. If the seer sees that the candle is small even though the person appears strong, it means that it is already ended.

Castaneda had told us before that the Toltecs never die because to be Toltec implies having lost the human form. Only at that moment we comprehended: if the Toltec has lost the human form, there is nothing that the eagle could devour.

He hadn't kept us in doubt either that the concepts master of man and mold of man as well as the image of the eagle referred to the same entity or were intimately related.

Several hours later, seated before hamburgers in a cafeteria on the corner of Westwood Boulevard and another street whose name I don't remember, Castaneda reported to us his experience of losing the human form.

According to what he said, his experience wasn't as strong as that of La Gorda (in *The Second Ring of Power*, La Gorda relates to Castaneda that when she lost the human form she began to see an eye always in front of her. That eye accompanied her all the time and almost ended in driving her crazy. Little by little she got used to it until, one day, the eye happened to form a part of her. Some day,... when I arrive at being a real being without form, I won't see that eye any more; the eye will be one with me...) who had symptoms similar to those of a heart attack. In my case, said Castaneda, a simple phenomena of **hyperventilation** was produced. In that precise moment I felt a big pressure: a current energy entered through my head, passed through my chest and stomach and followed through my legs until it disappeared through my left leg.

That was all.

To assure myself, he continued, I went to a doctor, but he didn't find anything. He only suggested that I breathe in a paper bag to diminish the amount of oxygen and to resist the phenomenon of hyperventilation.

According to the Toltecs, in some way you have to return or pay the eagle what belongs to it.

Castaneda had already told us that the master of a man is the eagle, and that the eagle is all the nobility and beauty as well all the horror and ferocity which is found in all that is. Why is the eagle the master of man?

The eagle is the master of man because it feeds from the call of life, of the vital energy that is loosened from all that is. And, making once more the gesture with his hands resembling the pecking head of the eagle, cleared the space of pecks with his arm, which he said, Like that! Like that! It devours everything!

The only way to escape the voracity of death is irrefutable and inescapable, the action begins. What does it consist of, how do you do this personal recapitulation? I wanted to know.

In the first place a list has to be made of all the people you have known in the length of your life, he responded, a list of all those who in one way or another have forced us to put the ego (that center of personal growth that later would be shown as a monster of 3,000 heads) on the table.

We have to bring back all those who have collaborated so that we might enter into that game of they like me or they don't like me. A game that isn't anything else than upset living about we ourselves... Licking our own wounds!

The 'recapitulation' has to be total, he continued; it goes from Z to A, going backwards. It begins in the present moment and goes toward early infancy, until two or three years of age and even earlier if it were possible. Since we were born, everything is being engraved on our bodies. The 'recapitulation' requires a great training of the mind.

How do you do this 'recapitulation'? One goes carefully bringing up images and fixing them in front of yourself, then, with a movement of the head from right to left, every one of the images is blown out as if we were sweeping them from our vision... The breath is magic, he added.

With the end of the 'recapitulation,' ended also are all the tricks, games and the self feeling. It seems that in the end we know all our tricks and there isn't any way to put the ego on the table without our realizing immediately what we are pretending with it. With personal recapitulation you can divest yourself of everything. Then, only the task remains; the task in all its simplicity, purity and rawness.

The 'recapitulation' is possible for everyone, but requires an inflexible will. If you fluctuate or hesitate; you are lost because the eagle will eat you. In that terrain there's no room for doubt.

In the first The Teachings of Don Juan, it says this: The thing that you have to learn is how to arrive at the crack between the worlds and how to enter into the other world... there is a place where the two worlds come together one over the other. The crack is there. It opens and closes like a door with the wind.

To arrive there, a man must exert his will, must, I would say, develop an indomitable desire, a total dedication. But he must do it without the help of any power and of any man...

I don't know how to explain all of this well, but in the fulfillment and dedication to the task, you have to be compulsive without truly being so because the Toltec is a free being. The task asks all of one; however, it is freeing.

Do you comprehend? If this is difficult to understand it is because, at its base, it deals with a paradox.

But to this recapitulation, added Castaneda, changing tone and posture, you have to put 'spice' on it. The characteristic of Don Juan and his 'pals' is that they are fickle. Don Juan cured me of being tiresome. He is not solemn, nothing formal. Within the seriousness of the task that they all perform there is always room for humour.

To illustrate in a concrete way the way that Don Juan taught him, Castaneda related to us a very interesting episode. It seems that he smoked a lot and that Don Juan resolved to cure him.

I smoked three packs a day. One after the other! I didn't let them go out. You see that now I don't have pockets, he said, showing his jacket that lacked them. I eliminated pockets in them so as to remove from my body the possibility of feeling something on my left side, something that might remind me of the habit. In eliminating the pocket, I eliminated also the physical habit of carrying my hand in my pockets.

One time Don Juan told me that we were going to spend several days in the Chihuahua hills. I remember that he expressly told me not to forget to bring my cigarettes. He recommended to me, also, to bring provisions for two packs a day and no more. So I bought the packs of cigarettes, but instead of 20 I packed 40. I made up some divine packs that I covered with aluminum foil to protect my cargo from animals and the rain.

Well equipped and burdened with a knapsack, I followed Don Juan through the hills. There I walked, lighting cigarette after cigarette, and trying to catch my breath.

Don Juan had tremendous vigor. With great patience he waited for me while observing me smoke and try to keep up with him through the hills. I wouldn't have had the patience that he had with me! he exclaimed.

We arrived, at last, at a pretty high plateau, surrounded by cliffs and steep hillsides. There Don Juan invited me to try to descend. For a long time I probed from one side to the other until finally I had to desist from the purpose. I wasn't going to be able to do it.

We continued like that, for several days, until one morning I woke up, and the first thing I did was to look for my cigarettes. Where were my divine packages? I looked and looked, and I didn't find them.

When Don Juan woke up, I wanted to know what was happening to me. He explained what was going on and told me, Don't worry. Surely a coyote came and carried them away, but they can't be very far. Here! Look! There are the tracks of the coyote!

We spent all that day trailing the tracks of the coyote in search of the packs. There we were, when Don Juan sat on the ground and, pretending to be a little old man, very old, began to complain, This time I'm sure lost... I'm old... I can't any more... While he was saying this, he grabbed his head in his hands and made a great fuss.

Castaneda told us this whole story imitating Don Juan in his gestures and tone of voice. It was a spectacle seeing him. A little later, the same Castaneda would tell us that Don Juan used to make reference to his histrionic [histrionic- Characteristic of acting or a stage performance; often affected] abilities. With all that walking around, continued Castaneda, I believe that 10 or 12 days had passed. I already didn't care about smoking!

That is how I lost the desire to smoke. We had gone along like demons running through the hills! When the time came to return, you can imagine that Don Juan knew the way perfectly. We went down directly to the town.

The difference was that, then, I already didn't have a need to buy cigarettes. From that episode, he said nostalgically, fifteen years have passed.

The line of not-doing, he commented, is precisely the opposite of the routine or the routines to which we are accustomed. Habits, like smoking for example, are those which have us tied up, in chains... in the sense of not-doing, on the other hand, all avenues are possible.

We were silent for a while. I finally broke it to ask about Dona Soledad.

I said that she had impressed me as a grotesque figure; really, like a witch. Dona Soledad is Indian, he answered me. The history of her transformation is something incredible. She put such willpower into her transformation that in the end she achieved it.

In that force her will developed to such an extreme that as a consequence she also developed too much personal pride. Precisely for this reason I don't believe that she can pass on tiptoes by the left side of the eagle. In whatever way, it's fantastic what she was capable of doing by herself!

I don't know if you remember who she was... she was Pablito's 'mamacita.' She was always washing clothes, ironing, washing dishes... offering little meals to someone or another.

In relating this to us, Castaneda imitated in gestures and movements a little old lady. You have to see her now, he continued. Dona Soledad is a young strong woman. Now she is to be feared!

The 'recapitulation' took Dona Soledad seven years of her life. She hid herself in a cave and didn't leave there. She stayed there until she finished with everything. In seven years that's all she did. Even though she can't pass together with the eagle, Castaneda said, full of admiration, she'll never go back to being the poor old thing she was before.

After a pause, Castaneda reminded us that Don Juan and Don Genaro still weren't with them.

Now already everything is different, expressed Castaneda nostalgically. Don Juan and Don Genaro aren't there.

The Toltec woman is with us. She asks tasks of us. La Gorda and I do tasks together. The others also have tasks to perform; distinct tasks, also in different places.

According to Don Juan, women have more talent than men. Women are more susceptible. In life, moreover, they wear out less and tire less than men.

For this reason Don Juan has left me now in the hands of a woman. He has left me in the hands of the other side of the man woman unit. Furthermore, he has left me in the hands of women; of the little sisters and La Gorda.

The woman who is teaching us now has no name. (Several months later La Gorda (Maria Tena) called me to send a message from Castaneda. In that conversation, she told me that Mrs. Toltec is named Dona Florinda, and that she is a very elegant, vivacious and anxious woman. Mrs. Toltec must be 50 years old.) She is simply the Toltec woman.

Mrs. Toltec is the one who teaches me now. She is responsible for everything.

All the others, La Gorda and I, are nothing. We wanted to know if she knew that he was going to meet with us as well as his other plans.

Mrs. Toltec knows everything. She sent me to Los Angeles to converse with you, he responded, turning his attention to me. She knows about my projects and that I'm going to New York.

We also wanted to know what she was like. Is she young? Is she old? we asked him.

Mrs. Toltec is a very strong woman. Her muscles move in a very peculiar way. She is old, but one of those who shines with the strength of her makeup.

It was difficult to explain how she was. In his trying, Castaneda sought for a point of reference and reminded us of the movie Giant.

Do you remember, he asked us, that movie that James Dean and Elizabeth Taylor appeared in? There Taylor plays a mature woman although in reality she was very young. The Toltec woman causes the same impression in me: a face with the makeup of an old woman with a body still

young. Also I could say that she acts old.

Do you know about the National Enquirer he casually continued, A friend of mine is in charge of saving them for me here in Los Angeles, and every time I come I read them. It's the only thing that I read here... Precisely in that newspaper recently I saw some photos of Elizabeth Taylor. Now she surely is large!

What did Castaneda want to transmit to us in making the comment about the National Enquirer is the only thing he reads? It's difficult to imagine that a sensationalist newspaper would be his fount of information.

That comment in some way synthesized his judgment with respect to the immense production of news that characterizes our era. That comment also encloses a judgment in respect to the values of the whole Western culture. Everything is on the level of the National Enquirer.

Nothing Castaneda said that afternoon was casual. The different fragments which he provided pointed at creating a determined impression on us. In this intention wasn't in any way wrong; on the contrary, his interest was to transmit the essential truth of the teaching they are involved in.

-- The second half of this interview will be printed in issue #15 of Magical Blend.

Another partial translation has previously been printed in Seeds of Unfolding.

Copyright 1985 Magical Blend Magazine

Magical Blend #15 - 1985
Evasive Mysteries - Part Two

[Transcriber's note: the published version of this article contains various strange phrases, numerous misspelled words and lots of peculiar punctuation, all of which is preserved here.]

A CONVERSATION WITH CARLOS CASTANEDA

Magical Blend Magazine Issue #15

[This is part 2 of the interview]

[Introduction to interview by Magical Blend Magazine]

During the planning stages for a book she is writing on mystical thinkers, Graciela Corvalan wrote a letter to Carlos Castaneda requesting an interview.

She later received a phone call from Castaneda in which he accepted her request, explaining that he was excited to be interviewed by her since she was not a member of the established press. Castaneda asked her to meet him at a specified time and date on the UCLA campus. When Graciela and a few colleagues arrived for the interview, she was asked not to use the tape recorder she had brought along. So, for seven hours, loaded with books and papers, Graciela kept notes as the man, who some have credited as being the crucial catalyst of mainstream awareness of metaphysics, explained his tutelage under the Yaqui Sorcerer, Don Juan, his present tasks assigned to him by the fierce Toltec Woman, and the nature of the Toltec teachings.

In the first part of this interview, published in Magical Blend issue #14, Graciela explained that the

interview was conducted in Spanish, noting that although Castaneda is fluent in Spanish, his native language is obviously English.

Graciela found that Castaneda, though well read, was not intellectual in a bookish sense. At no time, says Graciela, did he establish comparisons with other traditions of the past or present. It was obvious that he did not wish to contaminate his teaching with anything extraneous to it.

Graciela found Castaneda a master in the art of conversation as he talked at length about his past and present.

At the time he met Don Juan, Castaneda's primary interest was anthropology, but, upon encountering him I changed.

Graciela remembers that, Don Juan was present with us. Every time Castaneda mentioned or remembered him, we felt his emotion.

From Don Juan, Castaneda learned the sorcerer's principle rule: Give your all in each moment. And through Don Juan, Castaneda became involved in the long process of freeing himself from his past, a process which included divesting himself of both possessions and friends. According to Castaneda, the life of the Toltec warrior requires an unshakeable desire to be free. In the course of the interview, Castaneda revealed himself to be every bit the warrior showing a distaste for pacifism and cheap sentiment. Without an adversary, he maintains, we are nothing.

In questioning Castaneda about the Toltec tradition, Graciela found that, from an anthropological perspective, the word Toltec makes reference to an Indian culture of the center and south of Mexico that was already extinct at the time of the conquest and colonization of America by Spain. But, according to Castaneda, Toltec is descriptive not so much of hereditary characteristics but rather of a way of life and a way of looking at life. Toltec, says Castaneda is one who knows the mysteries of watching and dreaming. It is a tradition that has been maintained for more than 3,000 years. Though Toltec colonies or civilizations may have been destroyed by the white man, the Toltec nation could not be destroyed, for it represented something incomprehensible to the white man to whom the dream world remained cut off, mysterious and unapproachable.

According to Castaneda, the objective of the Toltec is to leave the living world; to leave with all that one is, but with nothing more than what one is. Don Juan succeeded in this activity, but it was not, emphasizes Castaneda, death, because Toltecs don't die. In *The Second Ring of Power*, la Gorda says, when the wizards learn to 'dream' they tie together their two attentions and, therefore, there is no need for the center to push out...sorcerers...don't die.

Freedom, says Castaneda, is an illusion perpetrated by the snare of the senses.

The art of the wizard consists of bringing learning to discover and destroy that perceptive prejudice. In transcending, or breaking, the tyranny of the senses, a door to a magical universe is opened. Castaneda describes the universe as being polarized between two extremes: the right side and the left side-The two halves of the bubble of perception. On the left side is action. Here there are no words. Here the mind does not conceptualize but rather the entire body realizes, without thoughts and without words.

The duty of a teacher such as Don Juan is to move all vision of the world into the right side, so that the left side can remain clear for the magical practice of will.

Presiding over the universe is the Eagle, an immense blackness representative of all the beauty and all the bestiality in everything that's alive. According to Castaneda, that which can be called human is very small in comparison to the rest. As excessive mass, bulk, and blackness, the Eagle attracts and feeds on all life force that is ready to disappear. It is, he says, like an immense magnet that picks up all those beams of light that are the vital energy of that which is dying.

The key to escaping the Eagle is recapitulation which involves going backward from adult to

infancy, clearing out the images of a lifetime, divesting oneself of everything until only the task remains and one arrives at the crack between the worlds. To arrive there, says Castaneda requires an indomitable desire, a total dedication. But one must do it without the help of any power and of any man.

According to Toltec tradition, all living things have a mold. The mold of man is the same for all human beings. In each individual it is developed and manifested according to the development of the person. The human form, on the other hand, impedes us from seeing the mold. In The Second Ring of Power, the form is described as a luminous entity. According to Don Juan, it is the fount and origin of man. The reason that Toltecs do not die is because, having lost the human form, they have nothing that the Eagle can devour.

In The Second Ring of Power, la Gorda relates that when she succeeded in losing the human form, she began to see an eye always in front of her which almost ended up driving her crazy. But someday she says, when I arrive at being a real being without form, I won't see that eye anymore; the eye will be one with me.

So, without further digression, we proudly present the second part of Graciela Corvalan's interview with Carlos Castaneda.

[Beginning of Corvalan Interview - Part 2]

EVASIVE MYSTERIES

By Graciela Corvalan, Ph.D.

We continued talking about the Toltec Woman and Castaneda told us that she's leaving soon. She's told us that in her place are going to come two women. The Toltec Woman is very strict, her demands are terrible! Now, if the Toltec Woman is fierce, it appears that the two who are coming are much worse. Let's hope that she's not leaving yet! One can't stop wanting nor can prevent the body from complaining and fearing the severity of the undertaking... Nevertheless, there's no way of altering destiny. So, there it grabbed me!

I don't have more liberty, he continued, than the impeccable one because only if I'm impeccable, I change my destiny; that is to say, I go on tiptoes by the left side of the eagle. If I'm not impeccable, I don't change my destiny and the eagle devours me.

The Nagual Juan Matos is a free man. He is free in fulfilling his destiny. Do you understand me? I don't know if you understand what I want to say, he asked worriedly.

Sure we understand! we retorted vehemently. We find a great similarity with what we feel and live daily in so much in this last section as in many other things that you have referred to us up to now.

Don Juan is a free man, he continued. He looks for liberty. His spirit looks for it... Don Juan is free from that basic prejudice; the perceptive prejudice that prevent us from seeing reality.

The importance of all that which we came speaking about resides in the possibility of destroying the circle of routines: Don Juan made him practice numerous exercises so he would become conscious of his routines: exercises such as 'walking in the darkness' and the 'power walk.'

How to break that circle of routines ? How to break that perceptive arc that ties us to that ordinary vision of reality? That ordinary vision that our routines contribute to establishing is, precisely, that which Castaneda denominates the attention of the tonal or 'the first ring of attention.'

To break that perceptive arc isn't an easy task; it could take years. The difficulty with me, he affirmed laughing, is that I am very pigheaded. Quite unwillingly I went on learning: For this reason, in my case, Don Juan had to use drugs... and so I ended up...with my liver in the stream!

In the line of not-doing is achieved the destroying of routines and becoming conscious, explained Castaneda. While saying this he stood up and started to walk backwards while he remembered a technique that Don Juan had taught him: Walking backwards with the help of a mirror. Castaneda continued reporting to us that to facilitate the task he devised an artifact of metal (like a ring that in the style of a crown he bore on his head) in which the mirror was fastened. In that way, he could practice the exercise and have his hands free.

Other examples of techniques of not-doing would be to put on your belt backwards and to wear your shoes on the opposite feet. All these techniques have as an objective to make one conscious of what one is doing at each moment. Destroying routines, he said, is the way we have of giving the body new sensations. The body knows...

Immediately Castaneda related to us some of the games that the Toltec youth practice for hours. They are games of not-doing, he explained. Games in which there are no fixed rules but rather they are generated as they play.

It seems that by not having fixed rules, the behavior of the players isn't foreseen and, consequently, everyone must be very attentive. One-of these games, he continued, consists in giving the adversary false signs. It's a game of pulling.

As he said, in that game of pulling, three persons participate and two posts and a rope are needed. With the rope you tie up one of the players and hang him from the posts. The other two players must pull on the ends of the rope and try to fool him giving him false signs. All have to be very attentive so that when one pulls, the other also does it and the person who is tied doesn't get twisted.

The techniques and games of not-doing develop attention: You can say that they are concentration exercises since they obligate those who practice them to be fully conscious of what they are doing. Castaneda commented that old age would consist in having remained shut in the perfect circle of routines.

The way of teaching of the Toltec Woman is to put us into situations. I believe that it's the best way because in putting us in situations we discover that we are nothing: The other way is that of self love, that of personal pride. The former way transforms us into detectives, always attentive to all that could happen or offend us. Detectives? Yes ! We spent time seeking evidence of love: if they love me or they love me not. Thus, centered in our ego we don't do anything but strengthen it. According to the Toltec Woman, the best is to begin considering that nobody loves us.

Castaneda told us that for Don Juan, personal pride resembles a monster of 3,000 heads. One destroys and knocks down heads but others always rise up... It's that one possesses all the tricks! he exclaimed. With the tricks it appears that we fool ourselves believing we are somebody.

I then reminded him of the image of catching weaknesses, as rabbits are caught in a trap, that appears in one of his books. Yes, he answered me, you constantly have to be on the lookout.

Changing position, Castaneda began to give us the history of the past three years. One of the many tasks was that of cook in those roadside cafés. La Gorda accompanied me that year as a waitress. For more than a year we lived there as Jose Cordoba and his wife! My complete name was Jose Luis Cordoba, at your service, he, said with a profound reverence. Without a doubt, everyone knew me as Joe Cordoba.

Castaneda didn't tell us the name or the location of the city in which they lived. It's possible that they had been in different places. It appears that at the beginning, he arrived with la Gorda and the Toltec Woman, who accompanied them for a while. The first thing was to find housing and work

for Joe Cordoba, his wife, and his mother-in-law. That was how we presented ourselves, commented Castaneda, otherwise, the people wouldn't have understood.

For a long time they looked for work, until finally they found it in a roadside cafe. In that type of establishment you begin very early in the morning. At five a.m. you have to be already working.

Castaneda told us, laughing, that in those places the first thing they ask you is: Do you know how to make eggs? What could there be to making eggs? It appears that he delayed enough time in figuring out what they were trying to say until he finally discovered that they were talking about the diverse ways of preparing eggs for breakfast. In restaurants or cafes for truck drivers. 'Egg making' is very important.

They spent one year working there. Now I know how to 'make eggs', he affirmed laughing. All that you would want! La Gorda also worked a lot. She was such a good waitress that she ended up by taking care of all the girls there. At the end of a year, when the Toltec Woman told them, That's enough, you're finished with this task, the owner of the cafe didn't want us to leave. The truth is that we worked very hard there. A lot! From morning till night.

During that year, they had a significant encounter. It relates to the story of a girl named Terry who arrived at the cafe where they were asking for work waitressing. By then, Joe Cordoba had gained the confidence of the owner of the establishment and was the one in charge of contracting and watching over all the staff. As Terry told them, she was looking for Carlos Castaneda. How could she know that they were there? Castaneda didn't know.

This girl Terry, continued Castaneda with sadness and giving us to understand that she looked dirty and messy, is one of those 'hippies' who take drugs... a terrifying life. Poor thing! Later, Castaneda would tell us, that, even though he could never tell Terry who he was, Joe Cordoba and his wife helped her a lot during the months she spent with them. He told us that one day she came in very excited from the street saying that she had just seen Castaneda in a Cadillac parked in front of the cafe. He's there, she screamed to us; he's in the car, writing. Are you sure it's Castaneda? How can you be so convinced? I told her. But she continued, Yes, it's him, I'm sure... I then suggested to her that she go out to the car and ask him. She needed to get rid of that immense doubt.

Hurry! Hurry! I insisted. She was afraid to speak to him because she said that she was very fat and very ugly. I encouraged her. But you look divine, hurry!

Finally, she went, but came right back crying a river of tears. It seems that the man in the Cadillac hadn't looked at her, and had thrown her out telling her not to bother him. You can imagine that I tried to console her, said Castaneda. It gave me so much pain that I almost told her who I was. La Gorda didn't let me; she protected me. Really, he couldn't tell her anything because he was performing a task in which he was Joe Cordoba and not Carlos Castaneda. He couldn't disobey.

As Castaneda told it, when Terry arrived she wasn't a good waitress. With passing months, without a doubt, they brought her to be good, clean and careful. La Gorda gave much advice to Terry. We cared for her a lot. She never imagined who she was with all that time.

In these last years they had passed moments of tremendous deprivation during which people maltreated and offended them. More than once he was at the point of revealing who he was, but... Who would have believed me! he said.

Besides, the Toltec Woman is the one who decides.

That year, he continued, there were moments in which we were reduced to the minimum: we slept on the ground and we ate only one thing.

Hearing this, we wanted him to explain to us the ways of eating they had.

Castaneda told us that Toltecs only eat one type of food at a time, but that they do it continually. Toltecs eat all day, he commented in a casual tone. (In this affirmation of Castaneda one can see his desire to break the image that people have of the sorcerer or wizard - beings with special powers who don't have the same needs as the rest of mortals. In saying that they eat all day, Castaneda united them with the rest of mankind.)

According to Castaneda, the mixing of foods, for example, eating meat with potatoes and vegetables, is very bad for your health. This mixture is very recent in the life of humanity, he affirmed. To eat one kind of food helps digestion and is better for the organism.

One time Don Juan accused me of always feeling sick. You can imagine that I defended myself! However, later I realized that he was right and I learned. Now I feel well, strong and healthy.

Also the way of sleeping that they have is different from that of the majority of us. The important thing is to realize that you can sleep in many ways. According to Castaneda, we have learned to go to sleep and to get up at a determined hour because that is what society wants from us. So, for example, said Castaneda, parents put the children to bed to get rid of them. We all laughed because there was some truth in his statement.

I sleep all day and all night, he continued, but if I add up the hours and minutes I sleep, I don't believe they come to more than five hours a day. To sleep in that way requires on the part of the person the ability to go directly into deep sleep.

Returning to Joe Cordoba and his wife, Castaneda told us that one day the Toltec Woman came and told them that they were not working enough. She ordered us, he said, to organize a pretty big business in landscaping, something like designing and arranging gardens. This new task of the Toltec Woman wasn't anything small. We had to contract a group of people to help us to do the work during the week while we were in the cafe. During the weekends we dedicated ourselves exclusively to the gardens. We had a lot of success.

La Gorda is a very enterprising person. That year we worked really hard. During the week we were in the Cafe and on the weekends always driving the truck and pruning trees. The demands of the Toltec Woman are very large.

I remember, continued Castaneda, that at a certain opportunity we were in the house of a friend when reporters arrived looking for Carlos Castaneda. They were reporters from The New York Times. So as to pass unnoticed, la Gorda and I put ourselves to planting trees in my friend's garden. In the distance we saw them enter and leave the house. That was when my friend yelled at us and mistreated us a lot in front of the reporters. It seemed that Joe Cordoba and his woman could be yelled at without consequence. None of those who were present there came to our defense. Who were we? There, only the poor people and dogs work in the sun!

So that was how between my friend and us we fooled the reporters. My body, however, I couldn't fool it. For three years we were involved in the task of giving experiences to the body to make it realize that, in truth, we are nothing. The truth is that the body isn't the only thing that suffers. The mind also is accustomed to constant stimuli. The warrior, however, doesn't have stimuli from the media; he doesn't need them. The best place, therefore, is that where we were! There nobody thinks!

Continuing with the story of his adventures, Castaneda commented that more than once he and la Gorda were kicked out in the street. Other times, going by truck down the highway, we were pushed to the edge of the road. What alternative did we have? It's best to let them pass!

Through all that Castaneda came telling us, it appears that the task of those years had to do with, learning to survive in adverse circumstances, and with surviving the experience of discrimination. This last, something very difficult to endure but very informative, he concluded with great calm.

The objective of the task consists in learning to remove oneself from the emotional impact which

discrimination provokes. The important thing is not to react, not to get angry. If one reacts, he/she is lost. One doesn't get offended by a tiger when it attacks, he explained, you move to the side and let it pass.

In another opportunity, la Gorda and I found work in a house, she as a maid and I as **butler**. You can't imagine how that ended! They kicked us out into the street without pay. Even more! To protect themselves from us in case we were to protest, they had called the local police. Can you imagine? We were jailed for nothing.

That year, la Gorda and I spent working very hard and suffering great **privations**.

Many times we didn't have anything to eat. The worst thing was that we couldn't complain nor did we have the support of the group. In that task we were alone and we couldn't escape. In whatever way, even though we might have been able to say who we were, nobody would have believed us. The task is always **total**.

Truthfully, I am Joe Cordoba, continued Castaneda accompanying his words with his whole body; and this is very beautiful because you can't fall lower. I have already arrived at the bottom you can be. That is all that I am. And with these last words he touched the ground with his hands.

As I told you before, every one of us has different tasks to perform. The Genaros are quite bright; Benigno is now in Chiapas and he's doing very well. He has a musical group. Benigno possesses a marvelous **gift** of imitation; he imitates Tom Jones and many more. Pablito is the same as always; he's very lazy. Benigno is he who makes the noise and Pablito **celebrates** it. Benigno is the one who works and Pablito gathers the applause.

Now, he said in way of conclusion, we have all finished the tasks which we have been doing and we are preparing ourselves for new tasks. The Toltec Woman is the one who sends us.

The story of Joe Cordoba and his woman had impressed us a lot. It dealt with an experience very different from those of his books. We were interested in knowing whether he had written or was writing anything about Joe Cordoba. I know that Joe Cordoba existed, said one of us; he had to exist. Why don't you write about him? From all that you have come telling us, Joe Cordoba and his woman is what has impacted me most.

I just brought a new **manuscript** to my agent, Castaneda answered us. In that manuscript, the Toltec Woman is she who teaches. It couldn't be any other way... The title might possibly be, The Stalking and the Art of Being in The World. [This book was published in 1981 as The Eagle's Gift.] There is all her teaching. She is the one responsible for that manuscript. A woman had to be the one who taught about the art of stalking. Women know it well because they have always lived with the enemy; that is to say, they have always walked 'on tiptoe' in the masculine world. Precisely for that reason, because women have long experience in that art, the Toltec Woman is she who has to give the principles of stalking.

In that last manuscript, however, there is nothing concrete about the life of Joe Cordoba and his woman. I can't write in detail about that experience because nobody would understand nor believe it. I can speak of these things with very few... Yes, the essence of the experience of the last three years is in the book.

Returning to the Toltec Woman and her nature, Castaneda told us that she was very different from Don Juan. She doesn't love me, he insisted, la Gorda, on the other hand, yes, she loves her! You can't ask the Toltec Woman anything. Before you speak to her she already knows what she has to say. Besides, you have to fear her; when she gets angry, she hits, he concluded making many gestures which indicated his fear.

We stayed in silence for a while. The sun had gone down and its rays reached us through the branches of the trees. I felt a little cold. It seemed to me that it was around 7 p.m.

Castaneda appeared also to become aware of the time. It's already late, he told us. What do you think about getting something to eat? I invite you. We got up and began to walk. As one of those **ironies**, Castaneda took charge of my notes and books for part of the way. The best thing was to leave everything in the car. That's what we did. Free of our **bundles**, we walked for some blocks in animated conversation.

All that they had achieved requires years of preparation and practice. One example is the exercise of dreaming. That which seems so foolish, affirmed Castaneda emphatically, is very difficult to achieve.

The exercise consists in learning to dream at will and in a systematic way. You begin by dreaming about a hand that enters the visual field of the dreamer. Then, you see the whole arm. You continue in a **progressive** way until you can see yourself in the dream. The other step consists in learning to use dreams. That is to say, once you have achieved control over them, you have to learn to act on them. So, for example, Castaneda said, you dream about yourself that you leave the body and that you open the door and go out into the street. The street is something **outrageous!** Something in you leaves you; something that you achieve at will.

According to Castaneda, dreaming doesn't take much time. That is to say, dreams don't occur in the time of our watches. The time of the dream is something very compact.

Castaneda gave us to understand that in dreams an immense physical **draining** is produced. In dreams, you can live a lot, he said, but the body **resents** it. My body really feels it... Afterwards you feel like a truck has run over you. Several times, touching upon that theme of dreaming, Castaneda would say that that which they do in dreams has a pragmatic value. In Tales of Power, you read that the experiences of dreams and those lived in one's waking hours acquire the same pragmatic **valence**, and that for sorcerers the criteria to differentiate a dream from reality becomes **inoperative**. (p. 18).

That of leaving or traveling outside of the physical body keenly caught our interest, and we wanted to know more about those experiences. He answered us explaining that every one of them had achieved different experiences. La Gorda and I, for example, go together. She takes me by the forearm and... we go.

He explained to us also that the group has common journeys. They are all in constant training whose objective would be 'to become witnesses.' To arrive at being witnesses means, affirmed Castaneda, that you can't judge any more. That is to say, it relates to an internal **sight** which equals not having prejudices any more.

Josefina seems to have great abilities to journey in the body of dreaming. She wants to take you there and probes recounting **marvels**. La Gorda is the one who always rescues her.

Josefina has a great facility to break that **arch** of being able to reflect upon things. She's crazy, crazy! he exclaimed. Josefina flies very far, but she doesn't want to go alone and always returns. She returns and looks for me... She gives me reports that are marvelous.

According to Castaneda, Josefina is a being who cannot function in this world. Here, he said, she would have ended up in some **institution**.

Josefina is a being who cannot be held to the concrete; she is **ethereal**. In whatever moment she can **definitively** leave. La Gorda and he are, on the other hand, much more cautious in their flights. La Gorda, particularly, represents the stability and **equilibrium** that in some measure he lacks.

After a pause, I reminded him of that vision of an immense **dome** which in The Second Ring of Power is presented as the place of meeting and where Don Juan and Don Genaro would be waiting for them.

La Gorda also has that vision, he commented **pensively**. That which we see isn't an earthly horizon.

It's something very smooth and arid in whose horizon we see rising an immense arch which covers all and which extends until it arrives at the zenith. In that point in the zenith, you can see a large brightness. You could say that it is something like a dome that emits an amber light.

We strove to press upon him questions so that he would give us more information about that dome. What is it? Where is it? we inquired.

Castaneda answered that by the size of what they see, it could be a planet. In the zenith, he added, there is like a great wind.

By the brevity of his answer, we realized that Castaneda didn't want to talk much about that topic. It is possible, also, that he couldn't find adequate words to express what they saw. No matter what, it is evident that those visions, those flights in the body dreaming, are a constant training for the definitive journey- that leaving through the left side of the eagle, that final leap which is called death, that giving an end to the recapitulation; that being able to say we are ready, in which we carry all that we are but nothing more than that what we are.

According to the Toltec Woman, Castaneda conferred to us, those visions are my aberrations: She thinks that that is my unconscious way of paralyzing my actions; that is to say, the way I have of saying that I don't want to leave the world. The Toltec Woman also says that with my attitude, I am detaining la Gorda from the possibilities of a more fertile or more productive flight.

Don Juan and Don Genaro were great dreamers. They had an absolute control of the art. I am surprised, immediately exclaimed Castaneda, raising his hand to his forehead, at the fact that nobody notices that don Juan is an outrageous dreamer. The same can be said of Don Genaro. Don Genaro, for example, is capable of bringing his body of dream to the every day life.

The great control of Don Juan and Don Genaro is evidenced in that of not being noted or passing by unnoticed. (In all his books, Castaneda has referred to that of not being noted and to go by unnoticed. In The Second Ring of Power, Castaneda records the times that Don Juan had ordered him to concentrate on not being obvious. Nestor, also, says that Don Juan and Don Genaro learned to not be noticed in the midst of all this. The two are masters of the art of stalking.

Of Don Genaro, la Gorda says that he was in the body of dreaming most of the time, (p. 270). All that they do, he continued with enthusiasm, is worthy of praise. Of Don Juan, I admire immensely his great control, composure and serenity.

Of Don Juan, it can never be said that he is a senile old man. He isn't like other people. There is here on campus, for example, an old professor who when I was a young man was already famous. At that time, he was at the peak of his physical strength and intellectual creativity. Now, he's chewing his tongue of cork! Now I can see him as he is, as a senile old man. Of Don Juan, on the other hand, you will never be able to say something like that. His advantage in respect to me is always abysmal.

In the interview with Sam Keen, Castaneda says that one time Don Juan asked him if he thought the two were equals. Even though he really didn't think that they were, in a condescending tone he said yes. Don Juan listened to him, but he didn't accept his verdict. I don't think that we are, he said, because I am a hunter and a warrior and you are more like a pimp. I am ready at any moment to offer the recapitulation of my life. Your small world full of sadness and indecision can never be equal to mine. (Sam Keen, *Voices and Visions* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), p. 122.)

In all that Castaneda had told us can be found parallels with other currents and traditions of mystical thinking. In his own books are cited authors and works of antiquity and of the present. I reminded him that, among others, there are references to The Egyptian Book of the Dead, to Tractatus by Wittgenstein, to Spanish poets like San Juan de la Cruz and Juan Ramon Jimenez, and to Latin American writers like the Peruvian Cesar Vallejo.

Yes, he responded, in my car there are always books, many books. Things that someone or another

send me. He was accustomed to read sections of those books to Don Juan. He likes poetry. It's clear that he only likes the four first lines! According to him, that which follows is idiocy. He says that after the first verse it loses force, that it's pure repetition.

One of us asked him if he had read of or if he knew the yoga techniques and the descriptions of the different planes of reality which the sacred books of India offer.

All that is marvelous, he said. I have had, moreover, pretty intimate relationships with people who work in Hatha Yoga.

In 1976, a doctor friend named Claudio Naranjo (Do you know him? he asked us.) connected me with a yoga teacher. That's how we went to visit him in his 'ashram' here in California. We communicated by means of a professor who acted as interpreter. I was trying to discover in that interview parallels with my own experiences of traveling outside of the body. There, however, he didn't speak of anything important. There was, yes, much show and ceremony, but he didn't say anything. Towards the end of the interview, this character took in his hands a metal watering can and began to wet me with a liquid whose color I didn't like at all. No sooner had he withdrawn, when I asked him what he had just thrown at me. Someone came near and explained to me that I should be very happy because he had given me his blessing. I insisted on knowing the contents of the container.

Finally I was told that all the secretions of the teacher are saved: Everything that comes from him is sacred. You can imagine, he concluded in a tone between jocular and joking, that here concluded the conversation with the yoga master.

A year later, Castaneda had a similar experience with one of the disciples of Gurdjieff. He met with him in Los Angeles upon the insistence of one of his friends. It seems that the gentleman had imitated Gurdjieff in everything. He had shaven his head and had a huge moustache, he commented, indicating with his hands their size. We had just entered, when he energetically grabbed me by the throat and gave me some tremendous blows. Immediately after he told me to leave my master because I was wasting my time: According to him, in eight or nine classes, he was going to teach me everything I needed to know. Can you imagine? In a few classes he can teach someone everything.

Castaneda also told us that the disciple of Gurdjieff had mentioned the use of drugs to accelerate the learning process.

The interview didn't last long. It seems that Castaneda's friend realized right away the ridiculousness of the situation and the magnitude of his error. That friend had insisted that he see the disciple of Gurdjieff because he was convinced that Castaneda needed a teacher more serious than Don Juan.

When the interview ended, Castaneda told us that his friend felt full of shame. We continued walking some six or seven blocks. For a while we talked about circumstantial things. I remember that I commented to him that I had read in La Gaceta an article by Juan Tovar in which he mentions the possibility of filming the books. (See Juan Tovar. Encounter of Power, La Gaceta, F.C.E. (Mexico, December 1974).

Yes, he said. At one time that possibility was spoken of. He later told us the story of his encounter with the producer Joseph Levine, who would have intimidated him from behind an immense desk. The size of the desk and the producer's words hardly comprehensible because of the huge cigar he kept between his lips, were the things that had made the biggest impression on Castaneda. He was behind a desk like it was a dais, he explained, and I, there below, very small. Powerful! With his hands full of rings with very large stones.

Castaneda had already said to Juan Tovar that the last thing he wanted to see was an Anthony Quinn in the role of Don Juan. It seems that someone had proposed Mia Farrow for one of the roles... To conceive of such a movie was very difficult, he commented. It's neither ethnography

nor fiction. The project in the end **fell apart**. The sorcerer Juan Matus told me that it wouldn't be possible to do it.

During that same time he was invited to participate in shows like Johnny Carson and Dick Cavett. In the end I couldn't accept things like that. What would I say to Johnny Carson, for example, if he asked me if I spoke to the coyote or not? What would I say? I'd say, yes... and then? **Indubitably**, the situation could have become very ridiculous.

Don Juan was the one who put me in charge of giving **testimony** of a tradition, said Castaneda. He himself insisted that I accept interviews and give conference to promote the books. Later he made me cut everything because that type of task burns a lot of energy. If you're into those things you have to give them force.

Castaneda explained clearly that with the production of his books, he is in charge of taking care of the expenses of the whole group. Castaneda allows everyone to eat.

Don Juan, he insisted, gave me the task of putting in writing all that the wizards and sorcerers said. My task doesn't consist in anything but in writing until one day they tell me, Enough, here you stop. The impact or not of my books, really is unknown to me because I'm not dealing with what's happening here. To Don Juan before and to the Toltec Woman now belong all the material in the books.

They are responsible for all that is said there.

The tone of his voice and his gestures impressed us in a lively way. It was evident that in that terrain the task of Castaneda consists of obeying. His objective isn't anything but to be impeccable as receptor and transmitter of a tradition and of a teaching.

Personally, he continued after a pause, I am working on a kind of journal; it's something like a manual. For this work, yes, I am responsible. I would like a serious publisher to publish it and to be in charge of distributing it to interested persons and to centers of study.

He told us that he had worked out some 18 units in which he believes he has summarized all the teaching of the Toltec nation. To organize the work, he has made use of the phenomenology of E. Husserl as a theoretical framework to make comprehensible what they taught him.

Last week, he said, I was in New York. I brought the project to the editors of Simon and Schuster but I failed. It seems they got scared. It's that something like that can't have success.

Of those 18 units I am the only one responsible, he continued in a meditative tone, and, as you can see, I wasn't successful. Those 18 units are something like the 18 falls in which I was bumped hard on the head. I agree with the editors that it's a work of heavy reading, but there I am... Don Juan, Don Genaro, all the others are different. They are **fickle!** (According to what Castaneda communicated to us by telephone, Simon and Schuster finally decided to accept the project of the journal that had seemed to worry him so much.)

Why do I call them units? he asked, moving ahead of us. I call them that because each one of them claims to show one of the ways to break the unit of the familiar. That unique perceptive vision can be broken in different ways.

Castaneda, trying once again to clarify this, gave us the example of the map. Each time we want to arrive at some place we need a map with clear points of reference to not get lost. We can't find anything without a map, exclaimed Castaneda. What later occurs is that the only thing we see is the map. Instead of seeing what there is to see, we finish seeing the map we carry inside.

Therefore, to break that arc of **reflexibility**, to constantly cut the bonds that lead us to the known points of reference, is the ultimate teaching of Don Juan.

Many times during that afternoon, Castaneda had to insist that he was just a contact to the world. All the knowledge of the books belongs to the Toltec nation. In the presence of his insistence, I couldn't but react and tell him that the labor of arranging the material from notes into coherent and well organized book must have been immense and difficult.

No, responded Castaneda. I don't have any work. My task consists, simply, in copying the page which is given me in dreams.

According to Castaneda, you can't create something from nothing. To pretend to create like that is an absurdity. To explain this to us, he brought up an episode in the life of his father. My father, he said, decided that he was going to be a great writer. With that idea, he resolved to fix his office. He needed to have an office that was perfect. He had to keep in mind the smallest detail, from the decorations of the wall to the type of light on his work table. Once the room was ready, he spent much time looking for a suitable desk for his task. The desk had to be of a determined measurement, wood, color, etc. Another such incident occurred with the selection of the chair on which he would sit. Later he had to select the suitable cover so as to not ruin the desk's wood. The cover could be plastic, glass, leather, cardboard. On this cover my father was going to rest the paper on which he would write his masterpiece. Then, seated at his chair, in front of the blank paper he didn't know what to write. That is my dad. He wants to begin writing the perfect phrase. Surely you can't write that way! One is always an instrument, an intermediary. I see each page in dreams, and the success of each one of those pages depends on the degree of fidelity with which I am capable of copying that model from the dream. Precisely, the page which impresses or impacts most is that in which I have achieved reproducing the original with most exactitude.

These commentaries of Castaneda reveal a particular theory of knowledge and of intellectual and artistic creation. (I thought immediately of Plato and of St. Augustine with his image of inner teacher. To know is to discover and to create is to copy. Neither knowledge or creation can ever be an undertaking of a personal nature.

While we ate dinner I mentioned to him some of the interviews which I had read. I told him that I had enjoyed greatly that which Sam Keen had done and which had been published first in Psychology Today. Castaneda was also satisfied with that interview. He has much appreciation for Sam Keen. During those years, he said, I knew many people with whom I would have liked to have continued being friends... one example is the theologian Sam Keen. Don Juan, however, said, Enough.

With respect to the interview in Time, Castaneda related to us that first a male reporter came to meet with him in Los Angeles. It seems it didn't go well, (he used some Argentine slang) and so he left. They then sent one of those girls that you can't turn down, he said making us all smile. It all came out well, and they understood each other magnificently. Castaneda had the impression that she understood what he had told her. In the end, however, she didn't do the article. The notes which she had taken were given to a reporter that I think is now in Australia, he added. It seems that this reporter did what he wanted with the notes they gave him.

Every time that for one reason or another, the Time interview was mentioned, his annoyance was evident. He had observed to Don Juan that Time was too powerful and important a magazine. Don Juan, on the other hand, had insisted that the interview be done. the interview was done, 'just in case' concluded Castaneda informally using once again a typically port area (Argentinian) expression.

We also spoke of the critics and of that which had been written about him and his books. I mentioned to him Richard deMille and others who had put in doubt the veracity of his works and the anthropological value of them.

The work that I have to do, affirmed Castaneda is free from all that the critics can say. My task consists of presenting that knowledge in the best way possible. Nothing they can say matters to me because I no longer am Carlos Castaneda, the writer. I am neither a writer, nor a thinker, nor a philosopher... in consequence, their attacks don't reach me. Now, I know that I am nothing;

nobody can take anything from me because Joe Cordoba is nothing. There isn't in all this, any personal pride.

We live, he continued, on a level lower than the Mexican peasants, which is already saying a lot. We have touched ground and we can't fall lower. The difference between us and the peasant is that he has hopes, wants things, and works to one day have more than he has today. We, on the other hand, don't have anything and each time we will have less. Can you imagine this?

Criticisms can't hit the target.

Never am I more full than when I am Joe Cordoba, he exclaimed **vehemently** standing up and opening his arms in a gesture of **plentitude**. Joe Cordoba, frying hamburgers all day with my eyes full of smoke...Do you understand me?

Not all the critics have been negative. Octavio Paz, for example, wrote a very good **preface** for the Spanish edition of The Teachings of Don Juan. To me his preface was most beautiful. Yes, Castaneda said **feelingly**, That preface is excellent. Octavio Paz is a complete gentleman. Maybe he is one of the last who remain.

The phrase, a complete gentleman doesn't refer to the undeniable qualities of Octavio Paz as thinker and writer. No! The phrase points to the **intrinsic** qualities of being, the value of a person as a human being. That Castaneda might point out that he is one of the last ones who remain **accented** the fact that he is relating to a species in danger of extinction.

Well, continued Castaneda trying to soften the impact, maybe there remain two gentlemen. The other is an old Mexican historian friend of his whose name wasn't familiar to us. He told us some anecdotes about him that reflected his physical vitality and intellectual **vivacity**.

At this **juncture** in the conversation Castaneda explained to us how he selects the letters that arrive to him. Do you want me to explain how I did it with yours? he asked directing himself to me.

He told us that a young friend receives them, puts them in a bag and keeps them until he arrives in Los Angeles. Once in Los Angeles, Castaneda always follows the same routine: First he dumps all the **correspondence** into a large box, like a toy box, and then he only takes out one letter. The letter he takes out is that which he reads and answers. Clearly nothing is done in writing.

Castaneda doesn't leave tracks.

The letter I took out, he explained, was the first one that you wrote. Later I looked for the other one. You can't imagine how many problems I had to get your phone number! When I already believed that I wasn't going to have any luck, I obtained it by the intervention of the university. I had really already thought that I wasn't going to be able to speak with you.

I was very surprised to know all the inconveniences that he had had to get to me. It appears that once he had my letter in his hands, he had to try to exhaust all means. In the magical universe much importance is given to signs.

Here in Los Angeles, continued Castaneda casually, I have a friend who writes me a lot. Each time I come I read all his letters, one after the other as if it were a diary. One certain time, between the letters I **bumped into** another one that without realizing I had opened. Even though I immediately realized that it wasn't from my friend, I read it. The fact that it was in the pile was for me a **sign**.

That letter put him in contact with two people who reported a very interesting experience to him. It was night and they had to enter the San Bernardino Freeway. They knew that to meet it they had to continue ahead until the end of the street. Then they had to take a left and continue until they reached the freeway. So they did it, but after some 20 minutes they realized that they were in a strange place. It wasn't the San Bernardino Freeway. They resolved to get off and ask, but nobody helped them. At one of the houses where they knocked they were met with screaming.

Castaneda continued telling us that the two friends went back down the road until they reached a service station where they asked for directions. There they were told what they already knew. So they again repeated the same steps, and without any inconveniences arrived at the highway.

Castaneda met with them. Of the two of them, it seems that only one is truly interested in understanding the mystery.

On the earth, he said as means of explanation, there are sites, special places or openings, through which you can enter and pass through to something else.

Here he stopped and offered to bring us. It's near here... in Los Angeles... If you want, I can take you, he said. The earth is something alive. Those places are the entrances from where the earth periodically receives force or energy from the cosmos. That energy is that which the warrior must store up. Maybe, if I am rigorously impeccable, I might get close to the eagle. May it be so!

Every 18 days a wave of energy falls upon the earth. Count, he suggested to us, starting on the third of next August. You will be able to perceive it. This wave of energy could be strong or not; it depends. When the earth receives very large waves of energy, it doesn't matter where you might be, it always reaches us. Before the magnitude of that force, the earth is small and the energy reaches all parts.

We were still animatedly conversing when the waitress approached and in a cutting tone asked if we were going to order anything else. As nobody wanted dessert or coffee, we had no other remedy than to get up. No sooner had the waitress moved away when Castaneda commented, It seems we are being thrown out...

Yes, we were being thrown out and, maybe, with reason. It was late. In surprise we checked the passing of time. We got up and left for the avenue.

It was night, the street and the people had the appearance of a fair. A mime dressed in tails and top hat was clowning around behind our backs. Everything we saw made us smile while our eyes searched for the plate that is always passed during those representations. To our right, under the eaves of an old theater, someone was trying another representation on a miniature stage. I believe I saw a cat ready for its function. Really there you could see everything.

In other times; a man disguised as a bear tried to compete with a human orchestra. The question is to look for alternatives each time more extravagant, someone commented. While we walked, returning to the campus, Castaneda spoke about a prospective trip to Argentina.

There a cycle is closed, he told us. To return to Argentina is very important for me. I'm still not sure when I can do it, but I will go. For now I have things to do here. Just in August three years of tasks will be accomplished, and it's possible that then I might go.

That afternoon, Castaneda spoke to us a lot about Buenos Aires, about its streets, neighborhoods and sports clubs. He remembered nostalgically Florida Street with its elegant stores and the itinerant multitude. He was even reminded with precision of the famous street of cinemas. Lavalle Street, he said making memory.

Castaneda lived in Buenos Aires during his childhood. It seems he was enrolled in a downtown school. Of that era he remembers with sadness that it had been said that he was wider than he was tall words that when one is a child hurt a lot. I always looked with envy, he commented, on those Argentinians so tall and handsome.

You know that in Buenos Aires you always have to belong to some club, continued Castaneda. I was from Chacarita. To be from River Plate isn't surprising, right? Chacarita, on the other hand, is always one of the last.

In those times, Chacarita always came out last. It was touching to see him identified with those who lose, with the 'underdog.'

Surely La Gorda will come with me. She wants to travel. Clearly she wants to go to 'Parice', he declared. La Gorda buys now in Gucci, is elegant and wants to go to Paris. I always say to her, Gorda, why do you want to go to Paris? There there is nothing. She has a certain idea about Paris, 'the city of light' you know.

Many times that afternoon, La Gorda was named. With her, Castaneda brought us to an extraordinary person due to the fact that he, without a doubt, feels great respect and admiration for her. What would be the sense then, of all that circumstantial information that he gave us about her? I believe that with those commentaries, as well as those in which he referred to the way of eating and sleeping of the Toltecs, Castaneda tried to prevent us from forming a rigid image of what they are. The work that they are doing is very serious and their lives are austere, but they aren't rigid nor can they be squeezed into the traditional norms of society. The important thing is to liberate oneself from schemes, not to replace them with others.

Castaneda gave us to understand that he hasn't traveled much in Latin America, if you exclude Mexico. Lately I've only been in Venezuela, he said. As I've already told you, I have to go to Argentina soon. There a cycle is closed. After that I will be able to leave. Well... the truth is that I don't know if I want to leave yet. His last words were said smilingly, Who doesn't have things that hold him down.

He has traveled through Europe several times for business related to his books. In 1973, however, Don Juan sent me to Italy, he affirmed. My task consisted of going to Rome to obtain an audience with the Pope. I didn't claim to obtain a private audience but one of those audiences which are conferred on groups of persons. All I had to do in the interview was to kiss the hand of the Supreme Pontiff.

Castaneda did everything that Don Juan had asked him. He went to Italy, arrived in Rome and asked for the audience. It was one of those Wednesday audiences, after which the Pope officiates at a public mass in the plaza of San Pedro. They did confer on me an audience but... I couldn't go, he said. I didn't even arrive at the door.

That afternoon, Castaneda referred several times to his family and to his typically liberal and frankly anticlerical background education. In The Second Ring of Power, Castaneda also makes reference to the anticlerical heritage that he received. Don Juan, who doesn't seem to justify all his prejudices and battles against the Catholic Church, says: To conquer our own foolishness requires all our time and energy. This is the only thing that matters. The others lack consistency. Nothing that your grandfather and your father have said about the Church has made them happy. To be an impeccable warrior, on the other hand, will give you force, youth and power. Thus, the appropriate thing for you is to know how to choose. (p. 236) Castaneda didn't theorize about these themes.

With respect to the disjunctive 'clericalism-anticlericalism' he only wanted us to receive a teaching with the example of his experience. That is to say, he makes us understand that it is very difficult to break the schemes which have been formed in youth.