

# CASTANEDA'S DON JUAN AS PSYCHOTHERAPIST

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examines Carlos Castaneda's early reports of his apprenticeship to the Yaqui Indian sorcerer, don Juan, as an analogue to psychotherapy. A review of the content and method of don Juan's teachings highlights a series of theoretical and technical considerations relevant to psychotherapy. In this context, this paper outlines the rudiments of a non-pejorative understanding of so-called neurotic behavior; also, it articulates and provides the rationale for several general therapeutic policies which might form the basis for a coherent approach to the practice of psychotherapy.

*"When you were born into this world, a new possibility was born with you."*

Nikos Kazantzakis

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## INTRODUCTION

This paper is not intended to demonstrate that don Juan's teachings can be reduced to traditional psychotherapy concepts. They cannot. Nor does it undertake to do comprehensive justice to don Juan's art. Space, and understanding, do not allow for this. Rather, as don Juan ushers Carlos Castaneda to a new conception of himself, and of the world, he touches upon the psychotherapist's ground. Tracking don Juan through this territory, and following him beyond it, opens a new horizon for psychotherapy.

Prevailing models of psychological functioning riddle us with inevitable conflict and irrationality. Or just as bad, they portray us as puppets to external controlling variables—and then console us that at least we can learn to pull our own strings. We have come to very unfortunate ways of thinking about our clients and, inevitably, ourselves. This paper articulates the rudiments of a reasonable and non-pejorative description of so-called neurotic behavior (Ossorio, 1976).

In the shadow of these prevailing models, it is no wonder we quake—hoping only for “adequate functioning.” Our clients are rarely encouraged to conceive the full prospect of their own greatness; it is not surprising that so few achieve it. It is a commentary on the present state of the behavioral sciences, and a sad one, that one has to look outside of the field entirely to find the kind of affirmation of man's possibilities which don Juan both articulates and embodies. It is a sad commentary that we relegate greatness to the realms of magic and metaphor.

For me the ideas of being a warrior and a man of knowledge, with the eventual hope of being able to stop the world and see, have been most applicable. They have given me peace and confidence in my ability to control my life. At the time I met don Juan I had very little personal power. My life had been very erratic. I had come a long way from my birthplace in Brazil. Outwardly I was aggressive and cocky, but within I was indecisive and unsure of myself. I was always making excuses for myself. Don Juan once accused me of being a professional child because I was so full of self-pity. I felt like a leaf in the wind. Like most intellectuals, my back was against the wall. I had no place to go. I couldn't see any way of life that really excited me. I thought all I could do was make a mature adjustment to a life of boredom or find ever more complex forms of entertainment such as the use of psychedelics and pot and sexual adventures. All of this was exaggerated by my habit of introspection. I was always looking within and talking to myself. The inner dialogue seldom stopped. Don Juan turned my eyes outward and taught me how to see the magnificence of the world and how to accumulate personal power. (Keen, 1972, p. 98)

### I.

All these questions take as real the very illusion which constitutes the actual problem, but what is the *guru* or therapist to do? . . . Almost the only thing the *guru* or therapist can do is to persuade the individual to act upon his false premise in certain

consistent directions until he sees his mistake. . . . For this, as we have seen, was the essential technique of liberation: to encourage the student to explore his false premises consistently—to the end. (Watts, 1969, pp. 107, 147–148)

It was the promise of personal power, above all, which intrigued Carlos Castaneda. Blundering and uncertain at every turn of his life, the experience of his own power always seemed to elude him. His long apprenticeship to the Yaqui Indian sorcerer, don Juan, was raised upon this very question: "How does a man acquire personal power?" To answer this question directly, there is only one possible reply: "One acquires personal power by no longer raising the question—no longer calling one's power into question in the first place." However, once such a question has taken hold, straightforward answers do not suffice. The only sufficient answer is actually to *transform the questioner* such that his experience of power is no longer in question. When asked by a psychiatrist how he cured neurotic people, a Zen master is reported to have replied: "I trap them! . . . I get them to where they can't ask any more questions!" (Watts, 1969, p. 40).

In his opening therapeutic move, don Juan masterfully mirrors Carlos' question by posing a riddle of his own. In doing this, he initiates a counter-game which has the form of a therapeutic double-bind. As he and Carlos sit on the small porch of don Juan's house, he instructs Carlos to "find his own spot":

I waited for him to explain what he meant by a "spot," but he made no overt attempt to elucidate the point. I thought that perhaps he meant that I should change positions, so I got up and sat closer to him. He protested my movement and clearly emphasized that a spot meant a place where a man could feel naturally happy and strong. He patted the place where he sat and said it was his own spot, adding that he had posed a riddle I had to solve by myself without any further deliberation. (Castaneda, 1972b, p. 14)

[his riddle, akin to a Zen koan, is a restatement—indeed, a caricature—of Carlos' original question. Don Juan is instructing Carlos to find happiness and strength, but such an instruction is a paradox. The behavior which don Juan is demanding from Carlos can, by its very nature, only be spontaneous. Even Carlos could sense the impossibility of his situation:

What he had posed as a problem to be solved was certainly a riddle. I had no idea how to begin or even what he had in mind. Several times I asked for a clue, or at least a hint, as to how to proceed in locating a point where I felt happy and strong. I insisted and argued that I had no idea what he really meant because I couldn't conceive the problem. (Castaneda, 1972b, p. 14)

Had Carlos only been willing to accept his own conclusion—that such a riddle posed a false and insoluble problem—the apprenticeship could

have come to completion on that Arizona bordertown porch with its first lesson. Instead, Carlos continued searching for his spot, finally becoming exhausted and falling asleep.

While the questions which Carlos asks may be contradictory, the fact that he is asking them is not. Carlos comes to don Juan, just as psychiatric clients typically present themselves to the psychotherapist, bearing a long history of personal failure. Important areas of Carlos' life are going awry, and his best efforts to change things for the better have been of little avail. Carlos, then, has good reason to question his adequacy, and even to regard himself as a powerless victim of the world. With the additional grounds of his father's life failures, he may even have reason to wonder if having personal power is consistent with the human condition. It is in this vein that Carlos initially presented himself to don Juan:

"I am only a man, don Juan," I said peevishly. I made that statement in the same vein my father used to make it. Whenever he said he was only a man he implicitly meant he was weak and helpless and his statement, like mine, was filled with an ultimate sense of despair. (Castaneda, 1972a, pp. 4-5)

In view of his learning history and his outlook, certain life plans would seem to be obviously ill-suited for Carlos. Just as a person who considered himself to be physically inept would be unlikely to plan for a career as a professional athlete, Carlos is hardly in a position to embark eagerly upon the path of becoming a warrior. If he were directly exhorted to do so, one could hardly be surprised by the reply: "Who? . . . me?" To a person who considers himself inadequate, however, other life approaches seem well-founded. He might rely upon withdrawal, for example, to avoid the threats and demands which he seems so ill-equipped to handle; he might play upon his helplessness to avoid responsibility for the continued failures which seem inevitable; he might stick to accustomed ways of doing things—at least he knows he can survive that way; he might dissemble and cultivate pretense to mask his felt inadequacy from others; he might adopt an aggressive posture, never to be caught with his guard down; he might ally himself with someone of greater power; or, he might go in search of his missing parts. Indeed, these would seem to summarize the basic so-called "neurotic" life styles; and Carlos employs some combination of them.

The next moves in don Juan's counter-game must address these realities. More gradually than at first, don Juan now sets to work in removing, shovelful by shovelful, the ground on which Carlos' dilemma stands. The first step, it would seem, must be to convince Carlos that the possibility of realizing personal power does exist. The certainty and natural grace of his own bearing present this most compellingly. Don Juan puts his own self-presentation in words as follows:

"I am only a man too, but I don't mean that the way you do. . . . I've vanquished my problems. Too bad my life is so short that I can't grab onto all the things I would like to. But that is not an issue; it is only a pity.'" (Castaneda, 1972, p. 5)

Don Juan also invokes his riddle to affirm the existence of a natural condition in which a man feels happy and strong. After exhausting himself in searching for his spot, Carlos is awakened by the sound of don Juan laughing and talking above his head, "'You have found the spot', he said" (Castaneda, 1972b, p. 18). Carlos, however, is not entirely convinced:

It was not clear to me whether or not I had solved the problem, and in fact I was not even convinced that there had been a problem. . . . I was certain that don Juan had watched me all night and then proceeded to humor me by saying that wherever I had fallen asleep *was* the place I was looking for. (Castaneda, 1972b, p. 18)

(Indeed, where else can a man seeking the discovery of his own power find what he's looking for except in *whatever place he happens to be!*) There can hardly be a more persuasive demonstration that a place exists than to convince a person that he has *already* been there. Don Juan elaborates on the importance of his riddle as follows:

He asked me to remember the time I had tried to find my spot, and how I wanted to find it without doing any work because I had expected him to hand out all the information. If he had done so, he said, I would never have learned. But, knowing how difficult it was to find my spot, and, above all, knowing that it existed, would give me a unique sense of confidence. (Castaneda, 1972b, p. 34)

However, even once the prospect of personal power is firmly established, the issue of Carlos' eligibility to achieve it remains in question. Don Juan has also begun to skillfully address this question since he promises that Carlos has *earned* confidence and assurance by virtue of having found his spot. Confidence and assurance are critical ingredients of personal power. Don Juan goes yet a step further:

Don Juan, on the other hand, was very sure I had succeeded, and, acting in accordance with my success, let me know he was going to teach me about peyote. "You asked me to teach you about Mescalito," he said. "I wanted to find out if you had enough backbone to meet him face to face. . . . Now I know I can take your desire alone as a good reason to learn". (Castaneda, 1972b, p. 19)

Don Juan, then, *treats* Carlos' behavior as successful. This provides Carlos with the grounds for a more favorable assessment of his own behavior, and of himself. Now, with incredible leverage, every new lesson about Mescalito will serve as an unspoken reminder of Carlos' eligibility for personal power. For don Juan is quite clear: the teachings

are offered only to those who have earned their right to them, to those who have already demonstrated their eligibility for mastery.

It is important to note that treating Carlos as successful carries considerably more weight than even the most convincing mere verbal portrayal. It is not only that the latter can be more easily dissembled, but more essentially that the way we treat things *is* the counterpart of our true perception of them. To see an object as a chair, for example, is to treat it as a chair—simply, with or without formal verbal acknowledgement. Repeatedly telling someone that he is successful can belie itself. For that is not the way one typically treats those whom he truly considers to be successful—i.e., patronizing them. In this light, one can readily recognize that the therapist—however well-meaning—who consistently makes apologies for his client's failures may only make matters worse. Treating someone as a success, then, must exceed mere kind support, and verbal flattery. Indeed, under many circumstances a well-placed constructive criticism will forcefully carry the implied message: "I am holding you responsible precisely because I do consider you to be someone who can succeed."

## II

If one examines all methods of psychotherapy at the most general level, a similar pattern can be seen. The patient is first persuaded that a positive change in himself might occur. The patient then participates in bringing the change about. This participation may include following a directive therapist's instructions, taking a journey to Lourdes, free associating daily in an analyst's office, and so on. Finally, the patient begins to look for and notice changes when they do occur. (Haley, 1963, p. 51)

In traditional approaches to psychotherapy, the transaction between therapist and client goes something like this: the client reports his failures; the therapist, in turn, advises that things can go better in the future. The therapist's message to his client seems to be on the order of: "Yes you've failed in the past; however, you can succeed in the future." The therapist affirms, then, that in spite of the evidence he has seen and heard—evidence which may seem overwhelmingly discouraging to his client—he sees reason for encouragement. And, after all, he is the expert. In this way, the therapist lays the foundation for a particular form of remedy deriving from the individual requirements of his client, and from his own preferred therapeutic approach. The relative success of treatment usually depends on the therapist's ability to direct, or otherwise encourage, his client to behave differently in the future—that is, to behave in such a way that he will encounter success rather than failure. Success experiences are essential. They provide the ground from which positive expectations can grow, and upon which further success can be established. The kind of

encouragement which therapists provide, then, can be of critical importance. It can provide clients with reasonable grounds for departing from their accustomed—and at least marginally successful—ways of doing things in order that they may discover ways of achieving true satisfaction.

In this traditional model, then, the therapist is acting on a set of “moves” which are calculated to elicit a desired response from his client at some point in the future. Indeed, this would seem to be the most familiar paradigm for persuasive techniques; it is straightforward and linear. This approach often leads to the desired results, just as a chess player who opens a game with P-K4 can usually expect his opponent to do likewise. This “Move 1 to Move 2” strategem, however, can be particularly vulnerable to the recalcitrant or unorthodox player since he is likely to go off and do something else entirely. Ironically, the psychotherapy client can, almost by definition, be expected to be an “unorthodox player.”

Moreover, there is a predictable drawback to this approach. A person who has a history of failure has *reasonable grounds* for disparaging his future prospects, and he may resist making any new attempts at all. Or worse, new attempts, once made, might fail. This approach, then, can be characterized by a predictable risk: therapy may be left at a standstill, without even a single success to build upon. The inertia of all those past failures might prevail.

In failing to challenge clients' pejorative assessments of their own behavior in the first place, traditional therapists often comply with the acid of past failures, only to subsequently labor in the hopes of repairing damages. Don Juan takes no such risks. He immediately challenges Carlos' view of his own behavior, dealing failures the deathblow, even reshaping them into successes. Don Juan redescribes Carlos' behavior as successful, treats Carlos accordingly, and—at least in the context of the apprenticeship—*forces* Carlos to be successful. In doing so, he does not merely encourage future moves, he transforms those which have *already* occurred. Don Juan does not merely encourage success; he ensures it! A particularly clear illustration of this occurs in dialogue as Carlos laments his over-all failure in the apprenticeship itself:

“I feel that I'm betraying you, don Juan.” . . .

“You're not betraying me.”

“I have failed you. I have run away. I feel I am defeated.”

“You do what you can. Besides, you haven't been defeated yet. What I have to teach you is very hard. I, for instance, found it perhaps even harder than you.” . . .

“But you're different; you've conquered your fear.” . . .

“I've told you already, only a crackpot would undertake the task of becoming a man of knowledge of his own accord. A sober-headed man has to be tricked into doing it.”

"I'm sure there must be scores of people who would gladly undertake the task." I said.

"Yes, but those don't count. They are usually cracked. They are like gourds that look fine from the outside and yet they would leak the minute you put pressure on them, the minute you filled them with water." (Castaneda, 1972a, pp. 27-28)

Thus, don Juan redescribes Carlos' behavior as evidence of strength, rather than of weakness as Carlos had originally taken it, and treats it accordingly. Nor does don Juan rely upon Carlos' agreement. Rather one is reminded of quicksand; the more Carlos resists and struggles, the deeper he sinks. Every new protest or resistance is only further proof of his sober-headedness, his basic soundness. Once again, don Juan has set up a therapeutic double-bind in which Carlos *can only succeed*. If Carlos continues to disparage his efforts in the apprenticeship he is only providing more evidence of his integrity; if he stops such self-disparagement, he is cured!

In principle, at least, no behavior is immune from being treated as successful. Indeed, an entire personal history could be transformed from bleak to promising in this way. If a therapist were to follow this tack consistently, the underlying message of the therapeutic approach would no longer be the problematical: "You've failed in the past; however, you can succeed in the future," but rather: "You've been succeeding all along; why expect anything different now!"

This may seem paradoxical, since it would appear that in some instances clients obviously *have* failed. While it may be true that some behaviors can be portrayed as only modest successes, consider the following clinical dialogue:

Client: I've accomplished nothing in my entire life. I've done nothing! Why, I don't even hold a job. My folks get down on me, put pressure on me, but still I do nothing. I guess I'm just sort of a zero.

Therapist: Ya know, it strikes me that *doing nothing* when someone else is trying to get you to *do something* is different from merely "doing nothing". It seems more like refusing, holding your own. It appears that you've really been "holding your own" with your folks, and doing it quite well!

The basic form of the therapist's reply, then, consists in showing his client what it is that he *is* succeeding at. A "success-portrayal" of this kind reveals a client to himself as both active and effectual. The responsibility for his behavior—for what he *is* doing, and for the effects it is having—is placed squarely on his own shoulders. This stands in sharp contrast to a client's usual description of his own behavior as a failure to have achieved something—essentially, then, as something he has *not* done (except perhaps, accidentally) and is therefore *not* responsible for. Most importantly, such a description places a person in the position of having a short



step to take from succeeding at one thing to succeeding at another, rather than the leap required to bridge a history of failure to a future of success. To be therapeutically appropriate and effective, portrayals of this sort must reflect a therapist's accurate understanding of what it is that his client has reason to do, and *is actually achieving* by doing what he is doing—regardless of whether or not his client has acknowledged or even recognized the achievement.

Such therapeutic redescriptions, then, require an appreciation of the basic intelligibility of a given client's mode of operating in the world—or, more colloquially, how that person's behavior makes sense. *Showing a person how he makes sense*, then, becomes the foundation for *showing him what he is succeeding at*. To the extent that a therapist is able to accomplish this, he provides his client with the basis for a more favorable concept of self, while he undermines the pejorative conclusions which clients often draw about themselves—i.e., that they are fundamentally inadequate, self-defeating, “masochistic” or “crazy.”

In reference to the above clinical example, showing a person how he makes sense could be represented by such therapist replies as: (a) “If you don't really think that you can succeed, then I can certainly see why you're not all that eager to try”; or (b) “If it appears that you've always failed in the past, it is no wonder that you really don't think that you can succeed now.” It is important to note that these descriptions, while essentially “legitimizing,” do not necessarily justify, or condone, the client's behavior. Rather they simply acknowledge the way in which a particular choice of behavior “makes sense.” Neither do they affirm the client's point of view beyond acknowledging that it is the point of view on which his choice is based. On the contrary, both of the above descriptions are non-committal in this regard and therefore can constitute a flexible groundwork for a wide range of therapeutic follow-throughs. The “success-portrayal” presented in dialogue above, for example, illustrates one such follow-through; here, it consists in giving the client reason to reconsider his interpretation of his own past behavior. Subsequent therapeutic plans may include whatever additional augmentation of learning or skills individual clients may require—after all, failures can sometimes be traced to a lack of competence or incomplete learning as in the case of the poorly-trained mathematician who mistakenly believes that  $2 + 2 = 3 \frac{1}{2}$ . Or, more broadly, a therapist may, as don Juan does, lead his client to reconsider and even to reexperience the entire context—world-view, or system of identification—in which these reasons, this “sense,” occur.

A wide range of portrayals can serve to show a person how he makes sense. The two examples which appear above were chosen because they are paradigmatic in that: (a) one's choice of behavior is directly a function of one's perception of reality—i.e., to see a situation in any given way *is*

*to have reason* to treat it accordingly (equally, to consider oneself as having certain characteristics or limitations is to have reason to behave accordingly); and (b) the original context of one's ordinary perception of reality is one's past learning history. All social—i.e., culturally shared—constructions of reality must, presumably, be learned.

Two therapeutic principles, or therapy policies, can be derived, then, as a basis for transforming present and past “failure” into success:

- (1) show the client what it is that he is, and has been, succeeding at; and
- (2) show him how he makes sense.

And, of course, treat him accordingly. Not only does don Juan treat Carlos in this way, but he also invokes the assistance of a small community of supernatural Allies to do likewise: “yerba del diablo” (devil’s weed); “humito” (the little smoke); and the protector and teacher, “Mescalito.”

Finally, don Juan once again endorses Carlos’ eligibility for acquiring personal power in a striking demonstration of therapeutic agility. Following his first encounter with peyote, Carlos makes the by now familiar appraisal that he has failed miserably. The dialogue which follows has the quality of a board game—one in which don Juan must insure that Carlos wins, by countering Carlos’ well-practiced losing moves. In this, unlike most board games, either both players win, or both lose—don Juan as a therapist, Carlos as a client. Carlos makes the opening move, advancing his position of discouragement and self-defeat; don Juan counters; and the game proceeds in this way:

I told don Juan how I felt about my experience. From the point of view of my intended work it had been a disastrous event. . . . Don Juan laughed and said, “You are beginning to learn.”

“This type of learning is not for me. I am not made for it, don Juan. . . . All I know is that it makes me afraid.”

“There is nothing wrong with being afraid. When you fear, you see things in a different way.”

“But I don’t care about seeing things in a different way, don Juan. I think I am going to leave the learning about Mescalito alone. I can’t handle it, don Juan. This is really a bad situation for me.” (Castaneda, 1972b, pp. 29–30)

Carlos is immovable. Frightened by his first experience with peyote, he clings tenaciously to his failure, his best hope for escape. So far don Juan has been able to shadow Carlos, at least preventing him from gaining the kind of (dis-) advantage which could snowball out-of-control. But now, the more directly don Juan challenges Carlos’s appraisal of his behavior, the more resistance Carlos mobilizes. The game is at a standstill; Carlos is

one move ahead. Suddenly, like a judo expert, don Juan rolls back, and Carlos, already in motion, can but follow him:

"Of course it is bad—even for me. You are not the only one who is baffled."

"Why should you be baffled, don Juan?"

"I have been thinking about what I saw the other night. Mescalito actually played with you. That baffled me, because it was an indication (omen)."

"What kind of an indication, don Juan?"

"Mescalito was pointing you out to me."

"What for?"

"It wasn't clear to me then, but now it is. He meant you were the 'chosen man' (*escogido*). Mescalito pointed you out to me and by doing that he told me you were the chosen man. . . . I've made up my mind and I am going to teach you the secrets that make up the lot of a man of knowledge." . . .

The way in which the situation had evolved was quite strange. I had made up my mind to tell him I was going to give up the idea of learning about peyote, and then before I could really make my point, he offered to teach me his "knowledge". . . . I argued I had no qualifications for such a task, as it required a rare kind of courage which I did not have. I told him that my bent of character was to talk about acts others performed. . . .

He listened without interrupting me. I talked for a long time. Then he said:

"All this is very easy to understand. Fear is the first natural enemy a man must overcome on his path to knowledge. Besides, you are curious. That evens up the score. And you will learn in spite of yourself; that's the rule."

I protested for a while longer, trying to dissuade him. But he seemed to be convinced there was nothing else I could do but learn. . . .

"You are the only person I have ever seen playing with him. . . . Think about the wonder of Mescalito playing with you. Think about nothing else: The rest will come to you of itself." (Castaneda, 1972b, pp. 30–32)

Don Juan's agility is indeed extraordinary. He has not only managed to counter Carlos' determined effort to "throw in the towel," but has somehow transformed the entire episode (which Carlos had interpreted as a total failure) into the strongest affirmation yet of Carlos' eligibility for achieving personal power. At the same time, don Juan has revitalized each future moment of the apprenticeship, each new chapter of his teachings, as an implicit reminder of that eligibility

### III

"A person's status and eligibilities summarize his relationships with other individuals or groups, and so they set limits to the possible facts concerning him, hence they define a kind of world, i.e., *his* world. . . . We noted that for a given observer the real world is the one which includes him *as* an observer." (Ossorio, 1971/1978, p. 14)

A person's appraisal of himself, and of his own behavior, is embedded in a larger context—i.e., his appraisal of the world. It is in this world that a

person lives, and with it that he must come to terms. This world, or his construction of it, provides the context for all of his choices. It is, then, in relation to this world that all self-appraisals are made. This connection is not only actual but also logical in that all appraisals are contextual in this way: the meaning or significance of any behavior depends on the circumstances (context) in which it occurs. Indeed, it is difficult to conceive of any behavior which might not be considered either appropriate or inappropriate, given a sufficiently well-tailored set of circumstances to support it. One's view of the world—that is, of the circumstances at hand—provides a context, then, which is essential not only for choosing behavior, but also for making sense of it. To effect relevant changes in a person's world-view can be expected to have a far-reaching effect on his choices, and also on his view of himself. Just as the moves of a board-game player will depend on what he takes to be the rules of the game, a person's behavior depends on his construction of the physical and social world. This construction of external reality not only provides the context for evaluating the adequacy of moves chosen, or not chosen, but also contributes to define the range of *possible* moves. Moreover, while the player in a board-game can usually switch to another board and a new set of rules, one's view of the world constitutes "the only game in town." It governs all purposeful behavior.

These interconnected appraisals—of oneself and of external reality—are inseparable. Together, they define each person's unique *relationship to the world*. Each person's behavior is not only always expressive of this relationship, but also serves to support and maintain it. Specifically, a person's appraisals of himself and of the world provide him with reasons for behaving certain ways; others then react to his behavior; and finally these reactions, or his interpretations of them, provide "fresh" information concerning what he and the world are "really" like. Consider the by now classic example of the person who has learned that the world is a hostile place, and that other people can't be trusted. Unable to turn his back on that kind of threat to his survival, he defends himself—perhaps by launching a self-protective offense, or merely by treating others with distrust and suspicion. To the extent that such behavior is typically provoking, others can be expected to react with hostility; thus, the world obligingly proves itself to be a hostile place. It is in this way, among others, that each individual's and culture's view of reality is self-confirming—however invalid it may be.

Correspondingly, Carlos considers himself to be inadequate, and, consistent with this view, he blunders and is often irresponsible in his behavior. In doing this, he *forcefully* invites external disparagement. When such disparagement follows, it is taken as "independent" proof that he *is* inadequate—and that others are simply recognizing it. Indeed, Carlos

takes no chances; if external disparagement is not forthcoming, he provides it himself. As a therapist, then, don Juan must be prepared to resist the trap, that is, the "demand characteristic" of Carlos' style. In this, don Juan must transcend the mechanical patterns of reaction which characterize conventional social interchange. Even more constructively, he must reverse the self-confirming machinery of Carlos' life pattern of failure and defeat. Challenging Carlos' self-presentation at the outset—i.e., as an inadequate victim of the world—he directly addresses this.

Conceiving of the therapeutic task more broadly now, as effecting a significant change in a person's relationship to the world, it is no longer surprising that a wide variety of therapeutic approaches—so-called "cognitive," "emotive" and "behavioral"—can all accomplish essentially similar goals. A person's relationship to the world will be reflected in his ideas, emotions and behavior; any of these can provide a point of entry for therapeutic intervention. Up to now, don Juan's therapeutic approach has mainly centered on reconstructing Carlos' view of himself and of his behavior. Broadening his attack, don Juan now begins to undermine Carlos' basic conception of reality (or, more poetically, to "stop Carlos's world"), and to teach Carlos to *act* in accord with a new and more powerful relationship to the world.

Don Juan's therapeutic technique is diverse and often extends beyond prescribing specific behaviors even to guiding him through a series of new participations in, and with, the world. In doing so, don Juan can insure that Carlos acquires relevant new concepts and skills, as well as practice in a wide range of life situations. Here, far outside the traditional therapist's office, don Juan can see to it that Carlos behaves in ways which prove to be successful—thereby providing Carlos with grounds for encouragement, and with a compelling basis for thinking more highly of himself. Successful experience of this kind can trigger a self-perpetuating *positive* cycle in a person's life. This constitutes, perhaps, one of the most valuable insights of the "behavior modification" school.

Introducing and structuring these new activities as he does—dangerous, intensely personal, and sometimes heroic in their scope—don Juan also enables Carlos to experience the pride and accomplishment of an initiate. Don Juan ushers Carlos to a new self-identity. With his characteristic flair for the dramatic, don Juan welcomes Carlos to the world of power through an extraordinary series of learning experiences including becoming a bird and flying like a man; a life-or-death battle with a crafty and protean sorceress, La Catalina; risking death by divining with lizards; and a daring encounter with a 100-foot gnat, the fearsome guardian of the other world. By insuring that Carlos is successful in confronting each of these situations, don Juan not only maneuvers Carlos into behaving differently, but also leaves him to reconcile the apparent contradiction

that he—a man who has considered himself as powerless—has done all of this.

Unlike many behavior therapists, however, don Juan does not settle for piece meal behavior change alone. As he leads Carlos to behave differently, don Juan also introduces new conceptions of the world which provide the supports for this new behavior. He portrays the world, and man's position in it, in such a way that this new way of behaving is reasonable. Indeed, it becomes the logical choice. It is the very force of these world-descriptions which renders don Juan's behavioral prescriptions so compelling to Carlos, and to the reader. The entire cosmology which don Juan unfolds is brilliantly tailored for Carlos' presenting problem and personal style. The generality of its appeal probably rests, at least in part, in the fact that Carlos' difficulties in life are widely representative of the times. Don Juan organizes his teachings in this way, around a series of articulated roles or more distinct relationships to the world. Each is coherent, and from each a particular world-view and mode of behavior logically follows: a crow; a hunter; a warrior; and, finally, a man of knowledge. Carlos learns to see the world from each of these new perspectives, and, importantly, to treat it accordingly. Employing these roles as vehicles, don Juan sets out to *re-socialize* Carlos thoroughly to a new conception of reality; and perhaps ultimately to demonstrate the relativity of all "fixed," or conditioned, systems for construing reality.

#### IV

But from this point of view the troubles and symptoms from which the patient seeks relief, and the unconscious factors behind them, cease to be merely psychological. They lie in the whole pattern of his relationships with other people and, more particularly, in the social institutions by which these relationships are governed: the rules of communication employed by the culture or group. These include the conventions of language and law, of ethics and aesthetics, of status, role, and identity, and of cosmology, philosophy, and religion. For this whole social complex is what provides the individual's conception of himself, his state of consciousness, his very feeling of existence. . . . For when a man no longer confuses himself with the definition of himself that others have given him, he is at once universal and unique. (Watts, 1969, pp. 20–21)

The first step to re-socialization is *de*-socialization—that is, "stopping the world" as Carlos knows it. Don Juan begins to loosen the pivotal supports of Carlos' construction of reality, beginning with the cornerstone—his personal history. All of Carlos' conceptions of himself and of the world are rooted in his past learning, his personal history. This history is perhaps the single greatest barrier to the achievement of don Juan's therapeutic goals. If this single domino could only be made to fall, it

would set off a chain-reaction which would leave no part of Carlos' world unchanged. Don Juan attempts to loosen the hold of Carlos' personal history in a variety of ways. Most directly, he simply instructs Carlos to drop it. As Carlos probes don Juan for his genealogy and family history, the following dialogue ensues:

"What did you call your father?" I asked.

"I called him Dad," he said with a very serious face.

I felt a little bit annoyed, but I proceeded on the assumption that he had not understood. . . .

"What did you call your mother?" I asked.

"I called her Mom," he replied in a naive tone.

"I mean what other words did you use to call your father and mother? How did you call them?" I said, trying to be patient and polite.

He scratched his head and looked at me with a stupid expression. . . .

"Well," he said. . . . "how else did I call them? I called them Hey, hey, Dad! Hey, hey, Mom!" . . .

Using all the patience I had, I explained to him that these were very serious questions and that it was very important for my work to fill out the forms. I tried to make him understand the idea of a genealogy and personal history.

"What were the names of your father and mother?" I asked.

He looked at me with clear kind eyes.

"Don't waste your time with that crap," he said softly but with unsuspected force. . . .

"I don't have any personal history," he said after a long pause. "One day I found out that personal history was no longer necessary for me and, like drinking, I dropped it." (Castaneda, 1974, pp. 10-11)

In the light of Carlos' culturally-based assumptions regarding the structure of reality, don Juan is asserting an impossibility. In the context of the deeply imbedded intellectual and scientific traditions of historical determinism, the very possibility of "dropping one's history"—that is, no longer being defined or determined by it—is nearly inconceivable. Neither don Juan, nor the world-conception which he is unfolding, however, is subject to the limitations of this tradition.

Don Juan proceeds to loosen two additional keystones of the construction of reality in which Carlos has become trapped. The first of these is the broad issue of "fear" itself; the second, the particular threat of possible failure and defeat. The issue of fear is of critical importance. Fear is the enforcer of one's socially—or culturally—learned conception of reality. To depart too radically from this agreed-upon reality is to risk forfeiting the social agreement that one is rational, sane, and thereby eligible to the rights of membership in the group. Losing one's "membership" in this context is the rough equivalent of losing one's place in the world. It is not difficult to appreciate, then, that the fear of jeopardizing basic social agreement concerning "what is real" can be one of the deepest and most

powerfully motivating experience known to man. To the extent that one's "true identity" is inconsistent with the definition assigned, and generally agreed upon, by the cultural group, this fear can become the arch-adversary to the realization of one's own integrity and, consequently, personal power.

Don Juan clearly identifies this adversary so that Carlos can begin to keep watch for it, track its movements within himself, and in this way be enabled to stand against it. At the same time, don Juan deals this fear a blow of his own by beginning to neutralize the threat of possible failure or defeat in the apprenticeship, and in life itself. In describing the difficulties which a man must be prepared to encounter on the path to knowledge, don Juan explains:

"He slowly begins to learn—bit by bit at first, then in big chunks. And his thoughts soon clash. What he learns is never what he pictured, or imagined, and so he begins to be afraid. Learning is never what one expects. Every step of learning is a new task, and the fear the man is experiencing begins to mount mercilessly, unyielding. His purpose becomes a battlefield.

And thus he has stumbled upon the first of his natural enemies: Fear! A terrible enemy—treacherous, and difficult to overcome. It remains concealed at every turn of the way, prowling, waiting. And if the man, terrified in its presence, runs away, his enemy will have put an end to his quest." . . .

And what can he do to overcome fear?

The answer is very simple. He must not run away. He must defy his fear, and in spite of it he must take the next step in learning, and the next, and the next. He must be fully afraid, and yet he must not stop. That is the rule! And a moment will come when his first enemy retreats." . . .

Anyone can try to become a man of knowledge; very few men actually succeed, but that is only natural. The enemies a man encounters on the path of learning to become a man of knowledge are truly formidable; most men succumb to them." (Castaneda, 1972b, pp. 56–58)

Don Juan has not only effectively identified fear as the enemy of self-knowledge, but he has also *transformed* the threat of failure. In an incredible therapeutic sleight-of-hand, the very possibility of an ordinary failure or defeat has vanished. From this point on, "failures" in the apprenticeship—and in Carlos' life over-all—are no longer ordinary failures, rather they have become the inevitable setbacks encountered by any man who heroically pursues the path of knowledge. Even the fear which Carlos had persistently complained of at every step of the apprenticeship has been transformed. No longer an expression and proof of his basic inadequacy, his fear has now become the natural and formidable enemy of a formidable man who is embarked in an extraordinary pursuit. Each person's conception of reality is constructed on a foundation of viewpoint and interpretation. Carlos, as client, typically *chooses* pejora-



tive descriptive, and interpretive, contexts in which to judge and evaluate his own behavior. Don Juan, as therapist, counters by *choosing* salutary and enlivening ones.

This reversal of the threat of possible defeat or failure is a pivotal therapeutic move. For as long as Carlos lives in the shadow of such a threat, he has reason to defend himself against it either by not playing at all, or by losing or winning predictably, compulsively. Even consistent success or winning, when it is driven by fear and compulsion, fails to support a realization of one's own personal power, of one's intrinsic sufficiency beyond any compulsive need for success or achievement. Don Juan explains by his portrayal of the man who is overcome by fear:

"He will never become a man of knowledge. He will perhaps be a bully, or a harmless, scared man; at any rate, he will be a defeated man." (Castaneda, 1972b, p. 58)

As with the bully and coward, the compulsive winner and compulsive loser are merely playing the two ends of a game in which everybody loses—i.e., fails to acquire power.

This can serve as a caveat to therapeutic approaches which train clients in the "techniques" of winning, succeeding, or becoming expert in assertive encounter. A particular form of the limitation inherent in mere "behavior" modification can be illustrated by the following example. Consider the case of a client who perceives nearly all relationships in the terms of "persecutor-victim" in a "dog-eat-dog" world. Conceiving of himself as a victim, he adopts a general policy of appeasement in his interpersonal relationships in the hopes of avoiding persecution. Consequently, he characteristically fails to assert himself even when the situation clearly calls for it. A therapeutic approach—assertiveness training, for example—which merely encourages more assertive behavior without addressing the underlying world-view may simply end by trading problems. For in the context of this world view, a person can conceive only one alternative role—i.e., that of the persecutor. While he may become quite skillfully assertive, his behavior may also be quite oppressive to others, and a new and equally intractable problem arises. Don Juan, by contrast, goes directly to the source of this issue:

"You haven't been defeated yet," he said.

He repeated the statement four or five times so I felt obliged to ask him what he meant by that. He explained that to be defeated was a condition of life which was unavoidable. Men were either victorious or defeated and, depending on that, they became persecutors or victims. These two conditions were prevalent as long as one did not "see"; "seeing" dispelled the illusion of victory, or defeat. (Castaneda, 1972a, p. 138)

Seemingly never at a loss for a therapeutic sense of humor, even in the most “serious” moments, don Juan continues:

He added that I should learn to “see” while I was victorious to avoid ever having the memory of being humiliated.

I protested that I was not and had never been victorious at anything; and that my life was, if anything, a defeat.

He laughed and threw his hat on the floor.

“If your life is such a defeat, step on my hat.” (Castaneda, 1972a, p. 138)

Thus, don Juan has structured a light-hearted therapeutic double-bind. Now Carlos, in order to maintain his self-presentation as helpless, powerless and defeated, must act assertively.

Still, however, for Carlos the man this dichotomy between winning or losing, victory or defeat, seems inescapable. Finally, in order to effect a radical departure from this view, don Juan teaches Carlos to become a crow—and thereby to consider a novel and salutary perspective on the world. The crow’s relationship to the world is entirely non-competitive. Rather than seeking victory, or even avoiding failure, the crow, simply, seeks that which is pleasing. A crow, then, is neither strong nor great, but it is inconspicuous, and in that there can be great freedom. It is in this way that don Juan teaches Carlos to become a bird, and fly like a man:

There was one last thing I had to change, he said, before I could fly. It was the most difficult change, and to accomplish it I had to be docile and do exactly as he told me. I had to learn to see like a crow. (Castaneda, 1972b, p. 122)

Don Juan explains his reasons for choosing the crow:

“I learned to become a crow because these birds are the most effective of all. No other birds bother them . . . Men don’t bother crows either . . . who cares about a crow? A crow is safe. It is ideal in size and nature. It can go safely into any place without attracting attention. On the other hand, it is possible to become a lion or a bear, but that is rather dangerous. Such a creature is too large; it takes too much energy to become one. One can also become a cricket, or a lizard, or even an ant, but that is even more dangerous, because large animals prey on small creatures. . . . A crow can also tell when something is moving too fast, and by the same token a crow can tell when something is moving just right. . . . It means a crow can actually tell what to avoid and what to seek. . . . When it moves inside just right, it is a pleasing sight and a crow will seek it.”

Don Juan said: “It does not take much to become a crow. You did it and now you will always be one.” (Castaneda, 1972b, pp. 125, 128–129)

## V

“When a man decides to do something he must go all the way,” he said, “but he must take responsibility for what he does. No matter what he does, he must know

first why he is doing it, and then he must proceed with his actions without having doubts or remorse about them." . . .

"That's an impossibility!" I said. . . .

"Look at me," he said. "I have no doubts or remorse. Everything I do is my decision and my responsibility." (Castaneda, 1974, pp. 39–40)

With many of the barriers at least partially removed, don Juan is now in a position to articulate directly a way of life which embodies power—a way of living which excludes Carlos' chronic dissatisfaction and self-uncertainty. Carlos, who has had good reason to expect failure in the past, has typically attempted to avoid taking responsibility for his behavior. Don Juan advises Carlos to begin to assume responsibility for his behavior and for his life. Carlos, however, continues to resist. The threat of possible failure continues its hold. The risk of choosing badly, of erring, renders precise and totally committed action untenable for Carlos. He defends his position as follows:

To illustrate my point I told don Juan the story of an old man of my culture, a very wealthy, conservative lawyer who lived his life convinced that he upheld the truth. In the early thirties . . . he was categorically sure that change was deleterious to the country, and out of devotion to his way of life and the conviction that he was right, he vowed to fight what he thought to be a political evil. But the tide of the time was too strong, it overpowered him. . . .

The last time I saw him he had concluded our conversation with the following: "I have had time to turn around and examine my life. The issues of my time are today only a story; not even an interesting one. Perhaps I threw away years of my life chasing something that never existed. I've had the feeling lately that I believed in something farcical. It wasn't worth my while. I think I know that. However, I can't retrieve the forty years I've lost." (Castaneda, 1972a, pp. 87–88)

Indeed, then, how is one to risk everything on choices which may in retrospect prove unsound? Don Juan answers with a story of his own:

He said that once upon a time there was a young man, a destitute Indian who lived among the white men in a city. He had no home, no relatives, no friends. He had come into the city to find his fortune and had found only misery and pain. From time to time he made a few cents working like a mule, barely enough for a morsel; otherwise he had to beg or steal food.

Don Juan said that one day the young man went to the market place. He walked up and down the street in a haze, his eyes wild upon seeing all the good things that were gathered there. He was so frantic that he did not see where he was walking, and ended up tripping over some baskets and falling on top of an old man.

The old man was carrying four enormous gourds and had just sat down to rest and eat. . . . When the young man saw the gourds he thought he had found his food for the day.

He helped the old man up and insisted on helping him carry the heavy gourds. The old man told him that he was on his way to his home in the mountains and the young man insisted on going with him, at least part of the way.

The old man took the road to the mountains and as they walked he gave the young man part of the food he had bought at the market. The young man ate to his heart's content and when he was quite satisfied he began to notice how heavy the gourds were and clutched them tightly.

Don Juan opened his eyes and smiled with a devilish grin and said that the young man asked, "What do you carry in these gourds?" The old man did not answer but told him that he was going to show him a companion or friend who could alleviate his sorrows and give him advice and wisdom about the ways of the world.

Don Juan made a majestic gesture with both hands and said that the old man summoned the most beautiful deer that the young man had ever seen. The deer was so tame that it came to him and walked around him. It glittered and shone. The young man was spellbound and knew right away that it was a "spirit deer." The old man told him then that if he wished to have that friend and its wisdom all he had to do was to let go of the gourds.

Don Juan's grin portrayed ambition; he said that the young man's petty desires were pricked upon hearing such a request. Don Juan's eyes became small and devilish as he voiced the young man's question: "What do you have in these four enormous gourds?"

Don Juan said that the old man very serenely replied that he was carrying food: "pinole" and water. . . . Don Juan said that, of course, the young man had not believed a word. He calculated that if the old man, who was obviously a wizard, was willing to give a "spirit deer" for his gourds, then the gourds must have been filled with power beyond belief.

Don Juan contorted his face again into a devilish grin and said that the young man declared that he wanted to have the gourds. . . . The young man took his gourds and ran away to an isolated place and opened them. . . .

"Well," I urged him. "Were the gourds empty?"

"There was only food and water inside the gourds," he said. And the young man, in a fit of anger, smashed them against the rocks."

I said that his reaction was only natural—anyone in his position would have done the same.

Don Juan's reply was that the young man was a fool who did not know what he was looking for. He did not know what "power" was, so he could not tell whether or not he had found it. He had not taken responsibility for his decision, therefore he was angered by his blunder. . . . "Had he been aware of his decision and assumed responsibility for it," don Juan said, "he would have taken the food and would've been more than satisfied with it. And perhaps he might even have realized that that food was power too." (Castaneda, 1974, pp. 44–47)

Impeccable choice *is* possible, don Juan reaffirms, and only a man himself can reduce his own choices to failure. In this, don Juan prepares Carlos for the eventual realization that power—far from being the external and mysterious force which Carlos seeks—is a natural consequence of choosing to assume full responsibility for oneself, and for one's actions. However, once again the game is at a stalemate; don Juan has rendered taking responsibility for one's choices as possible, but to Carlos it still seems risky. Finally, don Juan invokes the inevitability of Carlos' death to tip the scales.

## VI

"A hunter. . . assesses every act; and since he has an intimate knowledge of his death, he proceeds judiciously, as if every act were his last battle. Only a fool would fail to notice the advantage a hunter has over his fellow men. A hunter gives his last battle its due respect. It's only natural that his last act on earth should be the best of himself. . . .

Use it. Focus your attention on the link between you and your death, without remorse or sadness or worrying. . . . Let each of your acts be your last battle on earth. Only under those conditions will your acts have their rightful power." (Castaneda, 1974, pp. 84–85)

Don Juan introduces Carlos to the world of the hunter: a world in which the reality of death is ever-present—a world in which the necessity for precise and calculated action becomes crystal clear. Don Juan dramatically reminds Carlos that life is brief; and that death is sudden and often unexpected. In the shadow of death, the threat of minor failures is minute compared to the *failure to live* life to its fullest. Don Juan's reminders of death have the impact of telling Carlos that he had a terminal illness, and only each day left to live. His awareness of life, of each living moment, is thereby heightened and transformed.

Don Juan introduces death as an observational reality for Carlos. Carlos learns, as his body becomes properly attuned, that by turning his eyes to the left, he can actually perceive the shadow-like presence of death. In teaching Carlos to become a hunter, don Juan confronts him with death even more graphically:

He told me in a dry tone of command to stalk a rabbit, catch it, kill it, skin it, and roast the meat before the twilight . . .

I automatically started off, proceeding the way I had done scores of times. Don Juan walked beside me and followed my movements with a scrutinizing look. I was very calm and moved carefully and I had no trouble at all in catching a male rabbit.

"Now kill it," don Juan said dryly.

I reached into the trap to grab hold of the rabbit. I had it by the ears and was pulling it out when a sudden sensation of terror invaded me. For the first time since don Juan had begun to teach me to hunt it occurred to me that he had never taught me how to kill game. . . .

I dropped the rabbit and looked at don Juan.

"I can't kill it," I said. . . .

"What difference does it make? This rabbit's time is up. . . Kill it!" he commanded with a ferocious look in his eyes.

"I can't."

He yelled at me that the rabbit had to die. He said that its roaming in that beautiful desert had come to an end. I had no business stalling, because the power of the spirit that guides rabbits had led that particular one into my trap, right at the edge of the twilight.

A series of confusing thoughts and feelings overtook me, as if the feelings had been out there waiting for me. I felt with agonizing clarity the rabbit's tragedy, to have fallen into my trap. In a matter of seconds my mind swept across the most crucial moments of my own life, the many times I had been the rabbit myself. . . .

"The hell with it," I said loudly. "I won't kill anything. The rabbit goes free."

But as Carlos attempts to set it free, the rabbit is killed accidentally:

I was dizzy. The simple events of that day had crushed me. I tried to think that it was only a rabbit; I could not, however, shake off the uncanny identification I had had with it. . . .

Don Juan leaned over and whispered in my ear, "Your trap was his last battle on earth. I told you, he had no more time to roam in this marvelous desert." (Castaneda, 1974, pp. 86–88)

The impact of this lesson will not soon be forgotten. As the hunter, Carlos achieves the realization that he too is being stalked by death. Ever-conscious of this, he is able to use death as an adviser. Death advises him that each of his acts on earth may be his last, and to each he should give the very best of himself.

## VII

"Does this path have heart? All paths are the same: they lead nowhere. . . . Does this path have a heart? If it does, the path is good; if it doesn't, it is of no use. Both paths lead nowhere; but one has a heart, the other doesn't. One makes for a joyful journey; as long as you follow it, you are one with it. The other will make you curse your life. One makes you strong; the other weakens you." (Castaneda, 1972b, p. 76)

In a world where death is the hunter, one has little choice but to assume responsibility for one's life—to make every act count. Once reconciled to the inevitability of death, however, this responsibility ceases to be an onus. Rather the acceptance of one's death becomes a liberating force which enables indifference and abandon. For living is at the same time dying, and to resist death is to deny the full experience of life.

Carlos, like most people, rejects life. Neither he, nor life itself, somehow measures up to his concepts of the way it "ought" to be. Rather than fully accept and experience life, he dedicates his energies to trying to change or improve it. Compulsively, he seeks one solution after another. In the process of seeking satisfaction and fulfillment from a source outside himself, he can be expected to pursue the appearances of success upon which others have agreed—advanced education, material acquisition, even spiritual attainment. Every new attempted solution simply reinforces the illusion that something is missing in the first place. Finally, perhaps, Carlos is ready to acknowledge the liberating realization that *life*

*simply is* as it is; and that *he is* as he is, complete, and precisely the way he was intended to be. Nothing whatsoever is hidden. Power consists, simply, is recognizing this—in appreciating the wonder of life for the sake of itself; and in giving up the countless paths without heart which are based on a denial of life and of oneself. To follow such paths is to squander one's natural power. To lose touch with the experience of life, simply as it is, is to lose sight of the only true source of understanding, satisfaction, joy and power.

Don Juan reminds Carlos, and us, that all paths lead to death. In the face of this reminder, the logic of the path of heart, the path which is *intrinsically* rewarding, is indisputable. Only this path, he explains, holds power.

No longer constricted by the fear of failure, nor compelled in illusory pursuit, nor even limited by the norms and standards of his culture, a man is finally liberated. Once he has broken free even of the concepts, labels, and systems of explanation which his particular culture calls "reality," then he and his behavior become fluid and unpredictable. He now fully realizes that anything is possible. He simply responds to an ever-changing world. Just like don Juan, such a man has no routines. He relies upon the spontaneous creativity of life itself. Don Juan illustrates with a story:

"You like hunting; perhaps someday, in some place in the world, your path may cross the path of a magical being and you might go after it.

A magical being is a sight to behold. I was fortunate enough to cross paths with one. Our encounter took place after I had learned and practiced a great deal of hunting. Once I was in a forest of thick trees in the mountains of central Mexico when suddenly I heard a sweet whistle. It was unknown to me; never in all my years of roaming in the wilderness had I heard such a sound. I could not place it in the terrain; it seemed to come from different places. I thought that perhaps I was surrounded by a herd or a pack of some unknown animals.

I heard the tantalizing whistle once more; it seemed to come from everywhere. I realized then my good fortune. I knew it was a magical being, a deer. I also knew that a magical deer is aware of the routines of ordinary men and the routines of hunters.

It is very easy to figure out what an average man would do in a situation like that. First of all his fear would immediately turn him into a prey. Once he becomes a prey he has two courses of action left. He either flees or he makes his stand. If he is not armed he would ordinarily flee into the open field to run for his life. If he is armed he would get his weapon ready and would then make his stand either by freezing on the spot or by dropping to the ground.

A hunter, on the other hand, when he stalks in the wilderness would never walk into any place without figuring out his points of protection, therefore he would immediately take cover. He might drop his poncho on the ground or he might hang it from a branch as a decoy and then he would hide and wait until the game makes its next move.

So, in the presence of the magical deer I didn't behave like either. I quickly stood on my head and began to wail softly; I actually wept tears and sobbed for such a long time that I was about to faint. Suddenly I felt a soft breeze; something was sniffing my

hair behind my right ear. I tried to turn my head to see what it was, and I tumbled down and sat up in time to see a radiant creature staring at me. The deer looked at me and I told him I would not harm him. And the deer talked to me." (Castaneda, 1974, pp. 76-77)

Indeed, if a man could stand on his head and wail under those circumstances, he could do almost anything! Power, don Juan reveals, rests in liberating oneself from conditioned patterns of reaction and thoughtless routines. Power rests in rediscovering one's *self as source* of all choice and of all action.

## VIII

"A warrior is an immaculate hunter who hunts power; he's not drunk, or crazed, and he has neither the time nor the disposition to bluff, or to lie to himself, or to make a wrong move. The stakes are too high for that. The stakes are his trimmed orderly life which he has taken so long to tighten and perfect. . . . A hunter of power entraps it and then stores it away as his personal finding. Thus, personal power grows, and you may have the case of a warrior who has so much personal power that he becomes a man of knowledge." (Castaneda, 1974, pp. 91-92, 122)

Thus, don Juan has ushered Carlos into the world of personal power. Power is not, however, derived by following a set of specified rules for "well-adjusted" behavior. Rather it consists in personal choice and action, and in assuming full responsibility for both. Power inheres in realizing that every act may be one's last, and in always giving one's best.

The goal of the warrior stands in sharp contrast to the therapeutic concept of "adequate functioning." It is dedicating oneself to a task truly worthy of one's personhood: seeking the perfection of the warrior's spirit. Entirely different from a psychologically-sophisticated distrust of action, and of one's deeper motives, it is a balanced combination of deliberate control and exquisite abandon. A warrior is protected not by distrust of his passions, but rather by his unbending purpose.

Traditional therapies, themselves embedded in and blinded by cultural conceptions of reality, often only serve to lend support to the existence of illusory problems in the first place. "Therapy" can lend credibility to problems created, not by life itself, but by the concepts, labels and systems of explanations which can be confused for life itself. Don Juan teaches Carlos to perceive beyond the entire system of identification in which the false problems occur.

The power to which don Juan leads cannot be achieved by reducing life to a series of "psychological insights." Don Juan does not trade one set of predictabilities for another. Power, rather, is deeply rooted in the full recognition that the world is both unpredictable and awesome. And the



art of being a warrior, don Juan explains, is "to balance the terror of being a man with the wonder of being a man." (Castaneda, 1974, p. 267)

Beyond even our most cherished concepts and beliefs, *life simply is*. Each moment is new and has never been lived before. No one can tell even what we are capable of. Don Juan leaves Carlos, and us, with this: one's own integrity is all that one has in a world that is both wonderful and awesome; realizing one's own integrity leads to power; life is a battle for power; and a man's life is his only art.

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## NOTES

It remains a matter of dispute whether Castaneda's tales are to be taken as factual accounts, as he presents them, or rather as exceptional undertakings of fiction. For the purposes of the present paper it is sufficient that the world of don Juan is both substantive and internally consistent. It is a possible world, whether or not it proves to be an *actual* one.

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