

73 QUOTATIONS



Carlos Castaneda

(1925, 1931 or 1935-1998)

Carlos Castaneda became a sensation of the 1960s counterculture with a succession of books about a sorcerer's apprentice that purported to be factual anthropology but got exposed as fiction—a literary hoax. UCLA awarded Castaneda a Ph.D. in Anthropology for his dissertation later retitled *Journey to Ixtlan*, proving once again that anthropologists make no distinction between fact and fiction. Since 1932 the field of Anthropology has continued to base itself on the research conclusions in *Coming of Age in Samoa* by Margaret Mead, who got fooled by a couple of teenage Samoan girls—even after the hoax got exposed by a true scientist, Derek Freeman. Professor Castaneda is a deliberate hoaxer.

Hippies felt validated by his arguing through his Yaqui Indian sorcerer Don Juan that civilized people like himself *need* to take drugs in order to liberate themselves from convention and rational consciousness. Castaneda does excel as a fiction writer at dramatizing the difficulty of the individuation process and at inducing vicarious experiences of paranormal reality and transcendence of ordinary rational consciousness in the tradition of *Walden*, *Moby-Dick*, and the great Modernists. However, he is predominantly Postmodern in preaching total disengagement from society, escape from all responsibility, contempt for ordinary people, anarchistic individualism, cynicism, solipsism, hedonism, deception, atheism and a warlike relation to others.

ORDER OF TOPICS: revolution, on being a legend, why he became so popular, deception is the best policy, amorality, denies hoax, drugs, temporary aid, sobriety, reason, ego, escaping responsibility, self-pity, solipsism, atheist Existentialism, futility, mystery, Nature, sorcery, seeing, leap before you look, equality, becoming a warrior, knowledge, death:

REVOLUTION

To achieve the mood of the warrior is not a simple matter. It is a revolution.

I came from Latin America where intellectuals were always talking about political and social revolution and where a lot of bombs were thrown. But revolution hasn't changed much....you have to remake yourself. This is where real reform begins.

ON BEING A LEGEND

Yes, that I walked barefooted like Jesus and have no calluses. I am supposed to be stoned most of the time. I have also committed suicide and died in several different places.

WHY HE BECAME SO POPULAR

They wanted to be told to relax, turn on and blow their minds. But to me understanding is important.

DECEPTION IS THE BEST POLICY

An average man cares that things are either true or false, but a warrior doesn't.

It's better to get something worthwhile done [like getting a Ph.D.] using deception than to fail to get something worthwhile done using truth. [The end justifies the means, as Hitler said]

AMORALITY

A warrior doesn't know remorse for anything he has done, because to isolate one's acts as being mean, or ugly, or evil is to place an unwarranted importance upon the self.

When a man has fulfilled all four of these requisites—to be wide awake, to have fear, respect, and absolute assurance—there are no mistakes for which he will have to account.

A warrior takes responsibility for his acts, for the most trivial of acts.

DENIES HOAX

The idea that I concocted a person like don Juan is inconceivable. He is hardly the kind of figure my European intellectual tradition would have led me to invent. The truth is much stranger. I didn't create anything. I am only a reporter... I couldn't have cared less about finding a weirdo like don Juan. I was in a bus depot in Arizona with a high-school friend of mine. He pointed out an old Indian man to me and said he knew about peyote and medicinal plants.

DRUGS

Mescalito, the power of deity contained in peyote.

I have never taken LSD, but what I gather from don Juan's teachings is that psychotropics are used to stop the flow of ordinary interpretations, to enhance the contradictions within the glosses, and to shatter certainty. But the drugs alone do not allow you to stop the world. To do that you need an alternative description of the world. That is why don Juan had to teach me sorcery.

Some abandon is also necessary. You must silence the chatter that is going on inside your mind and surrender yourself to the outside world.

The internal dialogue is what grounds people in the daily world.... The passageway into the world of shamans opens up after the warrior has learned to shut off his internal dialogue.

When a warrior learns to stop the internal dialogue, everything becomes possible; the most far-fetched schemes become attainable.

If you enter a state of nonordinary reality, as you do when you use psychotropic plants, it is only to draw from it what you need in order to see the miraculous character of ordinary reality.

TEMPORARY AID

Don Juan used psychotropic plants only in the middle period of my apprenticeship because I was so stupid, sophisticated and cocky. I held on to my description of the world as if it were the only truth. Psychotropics created a gap in my system of glosses. They destroyed my dogmatic certainty. But I paid a tremendous price. When the glue that held my world together was dissolved, my body was weakened and it took months to recuperate.

He told me that for me to try to see without the aid of psychotropic plants would be useless. But if I behaved like a warrior and assumed responsibility I would not need them; they would only weaken my body.

“Power plants are only an aid,” don Juan said. “The real thing is when the body realizes that it can *see*. Only then is one capable of knowing that the world we look at every day is only a description.”

SOBRIETY

He said that he never drank, not even beer.

REASON

My mind has been in control all of my life and it would kill me rather than relinquish control. At one point in my apprenticeship I became profoundly depressed. I was overwhelmed with terror and gloom and thoughts about suicide. Then don Juan warned me this was one of reason’s tricks to retain control. He said my reason was making my body feel that there was no meaning to life. Once my mind waged this last battle and lost, reason began to assume its proper place as a tool of the body.

EGO

Feeling important makes one heavy, clumsy and vain. To be a warrior one needs to be light and fluid.

An average man is too concerned with liking people or with being liked himself.

ESCAPING RESPONSIBILITY

One of the earliest things don Juan taught me was that I must erase my personal history. If little by little you create a fog around yourself then you will not be taken for granted and you will have more room for change. This is the reason I avoid tape recordings when I lecture, and photographs.

For the warrior who has no personal history, no explanations are needed; nobody is angry or disillusioned with his acts. And above all, no one pins him down with their thoughts and their expectations.

The art of a hunter is to become inaccessible. [Also the art of a faculty adviser]

SELF-PITY

A warrior cannot complain or regret anything.

The spirit of a warrior is not geared to indulging and complaining, nor is it geared to winning or losing.

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.

It is of no use to be sad and complain and feel justified in doing so, believing that someone is always doing something. Nobody is doing anything to anybody.

Nothing in this world is a gift.

SOLIPSISM

The only thing that is real is the being in you that is going to die.

ATHEIST EXISTENTIALISM

We make ourselves.

A man is only the sum of his personal power.

Don Juan is a good existentialist. When there is no way of knowing whether I have only one more minute of life I must live as if this is my last moment. Each act is the warrior's last battle. So everything must be done impeccably. Nothing can be left pending.

There is no need to transcend the world. Everything we need to know is right in front of us, if we pay attention... For me the way to live—the path with heart—is not introspection or mystical transcendence but presence in the world. The world is the warrior's hunting ground.

It doesn't matter how one was brought up. What determines the way one does anything is personal power.

We either make ourselves miserable, or we make ourselves happy. The amount of work is the same.

FUTILITY

All paths are the same: they lead nowhere. However, a path without a heart is never enjoyable.

The sorcerer starts on his way back home [Ixtlan] knowing that he will never reach it, knowing that no power on earth, not even his death, will deliver him to the place, the things, the people he loved.

MYSTERY

The world is incomprehensible. We won't ever understand it; we won't ever unravel its secrets.

NATURE

Disease is a disharmony between a man and his world.

If you don't apologize to plants for picking them you are likely to get sick or have an accident.

SORCERY

In sorcery the total body is used as a preceptor.

I know three sorcerers and seven apprentices and there are many more. If you read the history of the Spanish conquest of Mexico, you will find that the Catholic Inquisitors tried to stamp out sorcery because they considered it the work of the devil.

I realized that it was a bilingual coyote.

SEEING

Seeing is a technique one has to learn.

Upon learning to *see* a man becomes everything by becoming nothing.

You are left with wonder; the true wonder of seeing the world without interpretation.

Seeing... is the final accomplishment of a man of knowledge, and *seeing* is attained only when one has *stopped the world* through the technique of *not-doing*.

My failure to “see” was a result of my insistence on trying to explain every one of don Genaro’s actions from a rational point of view.

I entered into a spin of rationalizations.

LEAP BEFORE YOU LOOK

A man of knowledge lives by acting, not by thinking about acting.

EQUALITY

Everything is filled to the brim, and everything is equal.

To regard the lion and the water rats and our fellow men as equals is a magnificent act of a warrior’s spirit.

“I am a hunter and a warrior and you are a pimp.... [Don Juan to Carlos] Your feeble world of indecision and sadness is not equal to mine.”

BECOMING A WARRIOR

Will is what makes you invulnerable.

A warrior takes everything as a challenge.

Warriors jump over walls; they don’t demolish them.

Whatever must be learned must be learned the hard way.

The hardest thing in the world is to assume the mood of a warrior.

The mood of the warrior is not so far-fetched for yours or anybody’s world. You need it in order to cut through all the guff.

Intent is what makes him invulnerable. Intent is what sends a shaman through a wall, through space, into infinity.

The art of a warrior is to balance the terror of being a man with the wonder of being a man.

KNOWLEDGE

Any warrior could become a man of knowledge. As I told you, a warrior is an impeccable hunter that hunts power. If he succeeds in his hunting he can be a man of knowledge.

A warrior acts as if he knows what he is doing, when in effect he knows nothing.

DEATH

A warrior considers himself already dead, so there is nothing to lose.

The moment you remember you must eventually die you are cut down to the right size.

Death stands to your left. Death is an impartial judge who will speak truth to you and give you accurate advice.

A warrior thinks of death when things become unclear. The idea of death is the only thing that tempers our spirit.

Only the idea of death makes a warrior sufficiently detached so that he is capable of abandoning himself to anything.

There is no way to go back to Los Angeles.

Some of these quotations are excerpted from "Sorcerer's Apprentice"
Sam Keen, *Psychology Today* (December 1972)
reprinted in *Seeing Castaneda*, ed. Daniel C. Noel
(Putnam's/Capricorn 1976)

