

This is a translation of "The Six Explanatory Propositions" which were included in the Spanish language version of the Eagle's Gift but were never published in the English versions of the book.

Six Explanatory Propositions: from The Eagle's Gift, by Carlos Castaneda

In spite of the amazing maneuvers that DJ did with my awareness, along the years I stubbornly insisted in trying to intellectually evaluate what he did. Although I have written at length about these maneuvers, it has always been from a strictly experiential point of view and, besides, from a strictly rational perspective. Immersed as I was in my own rationality, I couldn't recognize the goals of the teachings of Don Juan. To understand the stretch of these goals with a certain degree of precision, it was necessary that I lost my human form and arrived to the totality of myself.

The teachings of Don Juan were meant to guide me through the second stage of a warrior's development: the verification and unrestricted acceptance that within us lies another type of awareness. This stage was divided into two categories. The first one, for which Don Juan required Don Genaro's help, dealt with two activities. It consisted of showing me certain procedures, actions and methods that were designed to exercise my awareness. The second one had to do with the six explanatory propositions.

Due to the difficulties that I had in adapting my rationality in order to accept the plausibility of what he was teaching me, Don Juan presented these explanatory propositions in terms of my scholastic records. The first thing he did, as an introduction, was to create a division in myself by means of a specific blow on the right shoulder blade, a blow which made me enter an unusual state of awareness, which I couldn't recall once I was back to normality.

Until the moment in which Don Juan made me enter such state of awareness, I had an undeniable sense of continuity, which I thought of as a product of my vital experience. The idea that I had about myself was that of being a full entity that could explain everything it had done. Besides, I was convinced that the dwelling of all my awareness, if there

was such, was in my head. However, Don Juan showed me with his blow that it exists a center in the spinal cord, at the height of the shoulder blades, that is obviously a center of enhanced awareness.

When I questioned Don Juan about the nature of this blow, he explained that the nagual is a director, a guide who bears the responsibility of opening the way, and that he must be impeccable to impregnate his warriors with a sense of confidence and clarity. Only under these conditions is a nagual in the possibility of giving this blow on the back to force a displacement of awareness, because the power of the nagual is what allows the transition. If the nagual is not an impeccable practitioner, the displacement doesn't occur, as when I tried, unsuccessfully, to put the other apprentices in a state of heightened awareness hitting them on the back before we ventured into the bridge.

I asked Don Juan what this displacement of awareness implied. He said that the nagual has to strike on a precise spot, which varies from person to person but which is always located in the general area of the shoulder blades. A nagual has to see to specify the spot, which is located in the periphery of one's luminosity and not on the physical body itself; once the nagual identifies it, he pushes it in, more that striking it, and thus creates a concavity, a depression in the luminous shield. The state of heightened awareness resulting from this blow lasts as much as this depression lasts. Some luminous shields go back to their original forms by themselves, some have to be struck in another point to be restored, and some others never go back to their oval shapes.

Don Juan said that seers see awareness as a peculiar glow. Everyday awareness is a glow on the right side, which extends from the physical body's exterior to the periphery of our luminosity. Heightened awareness is a more intense shine associated with great speed and concentration, a fulgor which saturates the periphery of the left side.

Don Juan said that seers explain what happens with the blow of the nagual as a temporal dislodging of a center located in the luminous cocoon of the body. The Eagle's emanations are in reality evaluated and selected in that center. The blow alters their normal behavior.

Through their observations, seers have reached the conclusion that warriors must be put in that state of disorientation. The change in the way awareness works under these conditions makes this state an ideal territory to dillucidate the commands of the Eagle: it allows warriors to function as if they were in everyday awareness, with the difference that they can concentrate in everything they do with unprecedented clarity and strength.

Don Juan said that my situation was analogous to the one he had experienced. His benefactor created a deep division in himself, making him move once and once again from the awareness of the right side to the awareness of the left side. The clarity and freedom of his left side awareness were in direct opposition to the rationalizations and endless defenses of his right side. He told me that all warriors are cast into the depths of the same situation that polarity molds, and that the nagual creates and reinforces the division to be able to lead his apprentices to the conviction that there is an awareness in human beings yet unexplored.

1.-What we perceive as the world are the Eagle's emanations.

Don Juan explained to me that the world we perceive does not have a transcendental existence. Since we are familiarized with it we believe that what we perceive is a world of objects which exist such as we perceive them, when in reality there is not a world of objects, but, rather, a universe of Eagle's emanations.

These emanations represent the only immutable reality. It is a reality that encompasses all that is, perceivable and unperceivable, knowable and unknowable.

Seers who see the Eagle's emanations call them commands because of their urging force. All living creatures are urged to use the emanations, and they use them without getting to know what they are. Ordinary men interpret them as reality. And seers who see the emanations interpret them as the rule.

Despite the fact that seers see the emanations, they don't have a way of knowing what it is they are seeing. Instead of entangling themselves with useless conjectures, seers occupy themselves in the

functional speculation of how the Eagle's commands can be interpreted. Don Juan sustained that to intuit a reality which transcends the world we perceive stays at the level of conjecture; it is not enough for a warrior to conjecture that the Eagle's commands are instantly perceived by all creatures that live on Earth, and that none of them perceives them in the same way. Warriors must try to behold the flow of emanations and "see" the way in which man and other living beings use it to build their perceptual world.

When I proposed to use the word "description" instead of Eagles's emanations, Don Juan said that he was not making a metaphor. He said that the word "description" connotes a human agreement, and that what we perceive stems from a command in which human agreements do not count.

2.-Attention is what makes us perceive the Eagle's emanations as the action of skimming.

Don Juan used to say that perception is a physical faculty that living creatures groom; the final result of this grooming is known, among seers, as "attention". Don Juan described attention as the action of hooking and channeling perception. He said that this action is our most singular feat, which covers all the spectrum of human alternatives and possibilities. Don Juan established a precise distinction between alternatives and possibilities. Human alternatives are those that we are enabled to choose as persons who function within the social environment. Our landscape of this dominion is quite limited. Human possibilities are those that we are capable of achieving as luminous beings.

Don Juan revealed to me a classificatory scheme of three types of attention, emphasizing that calling them "types" was erroneous. In fact, they are three levels of knowledge: first, second and third attention; each one of them an independent dominion, complete in itself.

For a warrior that is in the initial stages of his learning, the first attention is the most important of the three. Don Juan said that his explanatory propositions were attempts to bring into first frame the way in which the first attention works, something that passes

completely unadverted to us. He considered imperative for warriors to understand the nature of the first attention if they were going to venture into the other two. He explained to me that the first attention has been taught how to move instantly through a whole spectrum of the Eagle's emanations, without emphasizing at all that fact, in order to reach "perceptual units" which all of us have learned that are perceivable. Seers call this feat "skimming", because it implies the capability of suppressing those emanations which are superfluous and selecting which of them must be emphasized.

Don Juan explained this process taking as an example the mountain that we were seeing at that moment. He stressed that my first attention, at the moment of seeing the mountain, had skimmed an infinite number of emanations to obtain a miracle of perception; a skimming that all human beings know because each one of them has attained it by himself.

Seers contend that everything the first attention suppresses to obtain a skimming, cannot be recovered anymore by the first attention under any condition. Once we learn to perceive in terms of skimmings, our senses stop registering the superfluous emanations. To dillucidate this point he gave me the example of the skimming: "human body". He said that our first attention is totally unconscious of the emanations that compose the external luminous shield of the physical body. Our oval cocoon is not subjected to perception; those emanations have been rejected which would make it perceivable in benefit of those which allow the first attention to perceive the physical body such as we know it. Therefore, the perceptual goal that children must achieve as they grow up consists in learning to isolate the appropriate emanations to be able to channel their chaotic perception and transform it into the first attention; in doing so, they learn how to build skimmings. All grown up human beings who surround children teach them how to skim. Sooner or later, children learn to control their first attention in order to perceive skimmings in terms which are alike to those of their teachers.

Don Juan never ceased to be amazed at the capability of human beings to bring order into the chaos of perception. He contended that all of us, by his/her own merits, is a magistral magician and that our magic consists in rendering reality to the skimmings that our first

attention has learned how to build. The fact that we perceive in terms of skimmings is the Eagle's command, but to perceive the commands as objects is our power, our magical gift. Our fallacy, on the other hand, is that we always end up being one-sided when forgetting that skimmings are only real in terms that we perceive them as real, due to the power that we have to do it. Don Juan called this an error in judgment which destroys the richness of our mysterious origins.

3.- The skimmings are made sense of by the first ring of power.

Don Juan used to say that the first ring of power is the force that stems from the Eagle's emanations to affect exclusively our first attention. He explained that it has been represented as a "ring " because of its dynamism, of its uninterrupted movement. It has been called ring "of power" due to, first, its compulsive character, and, second, because of its unique ability to stop its works, to change them or reverse their direction.

The compulsive character is better shown in the fact that it doesn't only urge the first attention to build and perpetuate skimmings, but it also demands a consensus from all the participants. Each one of us is demanded a complete agreement upon the faithful reproduction of skimmings, since conformity to the first ring of power must be total.

It is precisely this conformity which gives us the certainty that skimmings are objects which exist as such, independent from our perception. Besides, the compulsiveness of the first ring of power does not cease after the initial agreement, but it demands that we continuously renovate the agreement. Our whole life we must operate as if, for example, each one of our skimmings was perceptually the first one for each human being, in spite of languages and cultures. Don Juan granted that even if all this is too serious to be taken jokingly, the urging character of the first ring of power is so intense that forces us to believe that if the "mountain" could have an awareness of its own, it would consider itself as the skimming that we have learned how to build.

The most valuable feature that the first ring of power bears to a warrior is the singular capability of interrupting its flux of energy, or to totally suspend it. Don Juan said that this is a latent capability which exists within us all as a backup unit. In our narrow world of skimmings,

there is no need to use it. Since we are so efficiently buttressed and shielded by the net of the first attention, we do not realize, not even vaguely, that we have hidden resources. However, if another alternative to follow would present itself to us, such as is the warrior's option to use the second attention, the latent capability of the first ring of power could start to function and could be used with spectacular results.

Don Juan underlined that the biggest feat of sorcerers is the process of activating this latent capability; he called it blocking the intent of the first ring of power. He explained to me that the Eagle's emanations, which have already been isolated by the first attention in order to build the everyday world, exert an unbending pressure upon the first attention. For this pressure to stop its activity, the intent must be displaced. Seers call this an obstruction or an interruption of the first ring of power.

4.- *Intent* is the force that moves the first ring of power.

Don Juan explained to me that intent doesn't refer to have an intention, or to want one thing or the other, but rather has to do with an imponderable force that makes us behave in ways which could be described as intentions, wishing, volition, etc. Don Juan didn't bring it forth as a condition of being, stemming from oneself, such as is a habit produced by socialization, or a biological reaction, but rather brought it forth as a private, intimate force that we possess and use individually as a key that makes the first ring of power move in acceptable ways. Intent is what directs our first attention in order for it to focus on the Eagle's emanations within a certain frame. And intent is also what commands the first ring of power to obstruct or interrupt its flux of energy.

Don Juan suggested me to conceive intent as an invisible force which exists in the universe, without receiving itself, but still affecting everything: the force that creates and sustains skimmings. He asserted that skimmings must be incessantly recreated to be imbued with continuity. In order to recreate them each time with the freshness that they need to build a living world, we must intend them each time we build them. For instance, we must intend the "mountain" along with all

its complexities for the skimming to be fully materialized. Don Juan said that, for a spectator, who behaves exclusively based upon the first attention without the intervention of intent, the "mountain" would appear as an entirely different skimming. It could appear as the skimming "geometric form" or "amorphous spot of color". For the skimming mountain to be completed, the spectator must intend it, whether it is unconsciously through the urging force of the first ring of power, or premeditatedly, through the warrior's training. Don Juan pointed to me the three ways in which intent comes to us. The most predominating one is known by seers as "the intent of the first ring of power". This is a blind intent which comes to us by chance. It is as if we were in its way, or as if intent was in ours. Inevitably we find ourselves trapped in its net without having the least control of what is happening to us.

The second way is when intent comes to us by its own. This requires a considerable amount of purpose, a sense of determination on our part. Only in our capability as warriors we can put ourselves voluntarily in the way of intent; we summon it, so to speak. Don Juan explained to me that his insistence in being an impeccable warrior was nothing more than an effort to let intent know that he is putting himself in its way.

Don Juan used to say that warriors call this phenomenon "power". Thus when they speak of having personal power, they are referring to the intent that comes to them voluntarily. The outcome, he used to say to me, can be described as the facility to find new solutions, or the facility to affect people or events. It is as if other possibilities, previously unknown by the warrior, suddenly become apparent. In this way, an impeccable warrior never plans anything ahead, but his actions are so decisive that it seems as if the warrior had calculated beforehand each facet of his activity. The third way in which we find intent is the most rare and complex of the three; it occurs when intent allows us to harmonize with it. Don Juan described this state as the real moment of power: the culmination of a lifetime effort in search of impeccability. Only supreme warriors obtain it, and as long as they are in such state, intent lets itself be handled by them at will. It is as if intent had fused in those warriors, and in doing so it transforms them into a pure force, without preconceptions. Seers call this state the "intent of the second ring of power", or "will".

5.- The first ring of power can be stopped by a functional blocking of the capability of building skimmings.

Don Juan used to say that the function of the not-doings is to create an obstruction in the usual focus of our first attention. The not-doings are, in this sense, maneuvers destined to prepare the first attention for the functional blocking of the first ring of power, or, in other words, for the interruption of intent.

Don Juan explained to me that this functional blocking, which is the only method to systematically use the latent capability of the first ring of power, represents a temporal interruption that the benefactor creates in the disciple's capability for building skimmings. It is a premeditated and powerful artificial intrusion into the first attention, in order to push it beyond the appearances which the known skimmings present to us; this intrusion is accomplished by interrupting the intent of the first ring of power.

Don Juan used to say that in order to achieve this interruption, the benefactor treats intent as what it really is, a flux, a current of energy that can eventually be stopped or reoriented. An interruption of this nature, however, implies a commotion of such magnitude that can force the first ring of power to stop fully; a situation which is impossible to conceive under our normal life conditions. It is unthinkable to us that we can un-walk the steps we took when we consolidated our perception, but it is feasible that under the impact of this interruption we could place ourselves in a perceptual position very similar to the one of our beginnings, when the Eagle's commands were emanations which we still had not imbued with significance.

Don Juan used to say that any procedure the benefactor could use to create this interruption must be intimately linked with his personal power. Therefore, a benefactor doesn't use any process to handle intent, but rather moves it and makes it available to the apprentice through his personal power. In my case, Don Juan achieved the functional blocking of the first ring of power through a complex process, which combined three methods: the ingestion of hallucinogenic plants, manipulation of the body and maneuvering with

intent itself.

In the beginning Don Juan relied strongly upon the ingestion of hallucinogenic plants, apparently due to the persistence of my rational side. The effect was tremendous, and yet retarded the sought for interruption. The fact that the plants were hallucinogenic offered my reason the perfect justification to congregate all of its available resources to continue exerting control. I was convinced that I could logically explain anything that I was experiencing, along with the inconceivable feats that Don Juan and Don Genaro used to do to create the interruptions, as perceptual distortions caused by the ingestion of hallucinogenics.

Don Juan used to say that the most remarkable effect of hallucinogenic plants was something that every time I ingested them I interpreted as the peculiar feeling that everything around me oozed a surprising richness. There were colors, forms, details that I had never beheld before. Don Juan used this increment in my ability to perceive, and, through a series of commands and comments used to force me to enter a state of nervous restlessness.

Afterwards he manipulated my body and made me shift from one side of awareness to the other, until I had created phantasmagorical visions or absolutely real scenes with tridimensional creatures that could not possibly exist in this world.

Don Juan explained to me that once the direct relation between intent and the skimmings we are constructing is broken, it cannot ever be repaired. From that moment on we acquire the ability to catch a current of what he described as "phantom intent", or the intent of the skimmings which are not present at the moment or place of the interruption, this is to say, an intent put at our disposal through some aspect of memory.

Don Juan asserted that with the interruption of the intent of the first ring of power we become receptive and moldable; a nagual can then introduce the intent of the second ring of power. Don Juan was convinced that children of a certain age find themselves in a similar situation of receptivity; being deprived of intent, they are ready to be imprinted with any intent which is available to the teachers who

surround them.

After my period of continuous ingestion of hallucinogenic plants, Don Juan totally discontinued its use. However, he obtained new and more dramatic interruptions in myself manipulating my body and making me shift states of awareness, combining all this with maneuvers with intent itself. Through a combination of mesmerizing instructions and adequate comments, Don Juan created a current of "phantom intent" and I was lead to experience common skimmings as something unimaginable. He conceptualized all this as "glancing into the immensity of the Eagle".

Don Juan masterfully lead me through countless interruptions of intent until he was convinced, as a seer, that my body showed the effects of the functional blocking of the first ring of power. He said that he could see a unusual activity around the area of the shoulder blades. He described it as a little hole that had formed exactly as if the luminosity was a muscular layer contracted by a nerve.

To me, the effect of the functional blocking of the first ring of power was that it managed to erase the certainty which I had all my life that what my senses reported was "real". Quietly I entered a state of inner silence. Don Juan used to say that what gives warriors that extreme uncertainty that his benefactor had experienced at the end of his life, that resignation to failure that he himself was living, is the fact that one glance into the immensity of the Eagle leaves one without hope. Hope is the result of our familiarity with skimmings and the idea that we control them. In such moments only the warrior's life can help us to persevere in our efforts to discover that which the Eagle has concealed from us, but without hope that we can get to understand what we discover.

6.- The second attention.

Don Juan explained to me that the examination of the second attention must begin with the realization that the force of the first ring of power, which boxes us in, is a physical, concrete edge. Seers have described it as a wall of fog, a barrier that can be systematically brought to our awareness by means of the blocking of the first ring of power; and then can be perforated by means of the warrior's training.

After perforating this wall of fog, one enters a broad intermediate state. The task of the warriors then consists in going through it until they reach the next divisory line, which must be perforated in order to enter what it is properly the other self or the second attention.

Don Juan used to say that the two divisory lines are perfectly recognizable. When warriors perforate the wall of fog they feel that their bodies are squeezed, or they feel an intense shaking in the cavity of their bodies, generally to the right of the stomach or through the middle part, from right to left. When warriors perforate the second line, they feel an acute crack on the upper part of the body, something like the sound of a dry bough that is broken in two.

The two lines that box in both attentions, and individually seal them, are known to seers as the parallel lines. These seal both attentions by means of the fact that they extend into infinity, without ever allowing the crossing unless they are perforated.

Between both lines there exists an area of specific awareness that seers call limbo, or the world between the parallel lines. It is a real space between two huge orders of the Eagle's emanations; emanations which are within the human possibilities of awareness. One is the level which creates the self of everyday life, and the other is the level which creates the other self. Since the limbo is a transitional zone, there both fields of emanations extend one upon the other. The fraction of the level which is known to us, that extends into that area, hooks a portion of the first ring of power; and the capability of the first ring of power to build skimmings makes us perceive a series of skimmings in the limbo which are almost as those of everyday life, except that they appear grotesque, uncanny and contorted. In this manner the limbo has specific features that do not change arbitrarily each time that one goes into it. There exist in it physical features which resemble the skimmings of everyday life.

Don Juan sustained that the feeling of heaviness experienced in the limbo is due to the growing burden that has been placed on the first attention. In the area located right behind the wall of fog we can still

behave as we do normally; it is as if we were in a grotesque but recognizable world. As we penetrate further into it, beyond the wall of fog, it becomes progressively difficult to recognize the features or to behave in terms of the known self. He explained to me that it was possible to make that instead of the wall of fog anything else appeared, but that seers have opted for accentuating that which consumes less energy: to visualize the wall of fog does not demand any effort.

What exists beyond the second divisory line is known by seers as the second attention, or the other self, or the parallel world; and the action of going through both edges is known as "crossing the parallel lines". Don Juan thought that I could assimilate this concept more firmly if he described each dominion of awareness as a specific perceptual predisposition.

He told me that in the territory of everyday awareness we are inescapably entangled into the specific perceptual predisposition of the first attention. From the moment in which the first ring of power begins to build skimmings, the way of building them becomes our normal perceptual predisposition. Breaking the unifying force of the first attention implies to break the first divisory line. The normal perceptual predisposition passes then into the intermediate area which is between the parallel lines. One keeps building almost normal skimmings for some time. But as one approaches what seers call the second divisory line, the perceptual predisposition of the first attention begins to recede, it loses strength. Don Juan used to say that this transition is marked by a sudden incapability of remembering or understanding what one is doing.

When one gets closer to the second divisory line, the second attention begins to act on the warriors who undertake the voyage. If they are inexperienced, their awareness gets emptied, it goes blank. Don Juan held that this occurs because they are approaching a spectrum of the Eagle's emanations which has not yet a systematized perceptual predisposition. My experiences with la Gorda and the nagual woman beyond the wall of fog were an example of this incapability. I traveled as far as the other self, but I couldn't account on what we had done for the simple reason that my second attention was still unformulated and it did not give me the opportunity of formulating all I had perceived.

Don Juan explained to me that one begins to activate the second ring of power by forcing the second attention to wake from its slumber. The functional blocking of the first ring of power achieves this. Then, the task of the teacher consists in recreating the condition which started the first ring of power, the condition of being saturated with intent. The first ring of power is put in motion by the force of the intent given by those who teach how to skim. As my teacher he was giving me, then, a new intent which would create a new perceptual environment.

Don Juan said that it takes a lifetime of unceasing discipline, which seers call unbending intent, to prepare the second ring of power to be able to build skimmings which belong to another level of the Eagle's emanations. To dominate the perceptual predisposition of the parallel self is a feat of peerless value which few warriors achieve. Silvio Manuel was one of those few.

Don Juan warned me that one must not attempt to deliberately dominate it.

If this happens, it must be through a natural process which unfolds itself without much effort from our part. He explained to me that the reason for this indifference lies on the practical consideration that when it is dominated it simply becomes very difficult to break, since the goal that warriors actively pursuit is to break both perceptual predispositions to enter the final freedom of the third attention.