

The Power of Silence: Further Lessons of Don Juan Study Guide

The Power of Silence: Further Lessons of Don Juan by Carlos Castaneda

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Plot Summary

THE POWER OF SILENCE is anthropologist Carlos Casteneda's account of the teachings and methods of a Mexican Indian sorcerer, don Juan Matus, taught him. This book is one of many that record the on-going process of becoming a sorcerer, including Carlos's path to sorcery. Carlos notes that to deal intelligently with everyday life we need to train for years. The knowledge we need is complicated. The same, he says, is true of the sorcerer's world - it requires great schooling through oral instruction, manipulation of awareness, and so on.

Don Juan describes himself as a nagual, his name for a sorcerer. The nagual worldview holds that the world is contained of great bands of energy that emanate from a kind of world spirit. It manifests itself in a force known as intent. The center of energy in the universe is a God-like power known as the Eagle. Humans are simply concentrations of energy and power, places where energy bands intersect. The center point of their energy bands is called "the assemblage point." The assemblage point dictates the state of awareness that each person is in. Most of the time their assemblage point remains unmoved and stuck in a state of awareness focused only on the concrete and practical, the mundane. The job of sorcery is to teach each person who wants to, to move their own assemblage points at will to achieve liberation from the ordinary ways of life in order to know the spirit and intent and the abstract. Humanity, from the sorcerers' view, has undergone a kind of corruption, which has moved each person's assemblage point to a place of self-focus, self-pity and self-reflection, and only the actions of the spirit through the practice of sorcery can reestablish one's connection with intent.

Sorcery consists of three areas of expertise: the mastery of awareness, the art of stalking and the mastery of intent. The knowledge of these fields of expertise and the path to total, free awareness of the universe, is contained in three sets of six abstract cores. This book is the book of the first set, which contains the following abstract cores: the manifestations of the spirit, the knock of the spirit, the trickery of the spirit, the descent of the spirit, the requirements of intent, and handling intent. Each of these abstract cores forms a chapter of the book and is communicated through interactions between Carlos and don Juan and stories that don Juan recounts of his interactions with his teachers, the nagual Julian, and his teacher, the nagual Elias.



Introduction

Introduction Summary and Analysis

Carlos Castaneda, the main character, begins his narrative of his time spent with don Juan, a Mexican sorcerer, known as a nagual. The aim of the nagual is to master "intent" or the mental aims of the universe. The concept of "intent" is extremely abstract, however, and must be explained throughout the book. Carlos and don Juan have a series of conversations throughout the introduction, where the philosophy of nagualism is explained. The world is made of energy fields, and humans are tight bundles of energy that can be manipulated by themselves and by others. Nagualism is about the reorientation of human energy fields in order to achieve peace and freedom from the mundane folkways of life. Men do not notice their natural abilities to use their energies to achieve peace because they are bogged down by the vagaries of life. Sorcery is the ability to use energy fields that are not used with ordinary perception. Don Juan tells Carlos that sorcery is a state of awareness beyond ordinary perception.

As the introduction continues, Don Juan uses a small tap on Carlos's shoulder to shift his energy field to give Carlos his first taste of an alternative perception. Carlos enters into this state of awareness where he experiences the unmeasurable, indescribable force that sorcerers call intent. All things in the universe are connected to it. Sorcery then, is the procedure of connecting directly to intent. Carlos has entered into apprenticeship with don Juan in order to learn the ways of sorcery but not to be a sorcerer himself. Castaneda is an anthropologist who hopes to publish a book on don Juan's teachings.

Don Juan teaches Carlos that becoming a sorcerer requires mastering three areas of expertise: the mastery of awareness, the art of stalking, and the mastery of intent. Awareness concerns the mind, stalking the heart and intent the spirit. These masteries are achieved by learning to manipulate the center of one's energy field, one's "assemblage point." When one's assemblage point is moved she is able to see new energy field; this is called seeing. A new world becomes perceivable. And intent is the force that causes this perception. Sorcerers aim to reach a state of total awareness to experience the full range of perception available to humanity. This awareness even implies a kind of death to the world. The key to sorcery is the moving of the assemblage point.

Castaneda explains that he could not write these stories down until he finished his training with don Juan and his associates, not only because don Juan requested that he not, but because he couldn't articulate his experience. Finally, Castaneda gives us the structure of the book. It is divided into three sets of six abstract cores of knowledge that increase in complexity. They are (a) the manifestations of the spirit, (b) the knock of the spirit, (c) the trickery of the spirit, (d) the descent of the spirit, (e) the requirements of intent, and (f) handling intent.



Chapter 1: The Manifestations of the Spirit (The First Abstract Core)

Chapter 1: The Manifestations of the Spirit (The First Abstract Core) Summary and Analysis

Don Juan communicates to Carlos through stories much of the time. Many of his stories concern his teacher, the nagual Julian. The point of these stories is to describe how other sorcerers behaved and what their personalities were. Don Juan emphasizes a focus on the past in order to get a point of reference to examine intent. These stories must be thought through and relived. Don Juan takes Carlos to a cave to recount these stories and notes that the cave was created by ancient sorcerers to promote focus. The first story Don Juan tells Carlos is the story of the "Manifestations of the Spirit," the first abstract core of knowledge. These abstract cores are blueprints of chains of events that lead to a higher level of awareness. All sorcerers taught these cores to their apprentices. Don Juan mentions how fortunate he was to spend eight years with his teacher, the nagual Julian. He also knows Julian's teacher, the nagual Elias, who Don Juan believes has the greatest influence. Each nagual discovers his own special abilities. Julian could convert himself into many types of persons, as he was originally an actor. He could even change his physical appearance. Don Juan emphasizes the importance of the nagual-apprentice relationship, which inspires gratitude in the apprentice. The naguals mold intent in their apprentices. Casteneda ends this section by arguing that the only way to know intent is through a living connection between intent and all sentient beings. As he ends this point, Carlos is overwhelmed by silence and is pushed into a restful but agitated sleep.



Chapter 1: The Manifestations of the Spirit (The Impeccability of the Nagual Elias)

Chapter 1: The Manifestations of the Spirit (The Impeccability of the Nagual Elias) Summary and Analysis

As Carlos wakes up, Don Juan notes that his first story was about the connection between intent and the nagual. The spirit sets up a lure for the nagual to an apprentice, and the nagual must evaluate the decision. Every act the nagual does is performed to strengthen their connection with intent or as a response to the link. Don Juan begins the story of how he met his benefactor, the nagual Julian.

Don Juan was practically enslaved by a foreman at an isolated hacienda. Don Juan escaped but the foreman caught him and shot don Juan in the chest. As don Juan was dying, the nagual Julian came along and healed him and took him home. The spirit had sent Julian several omens to warn him of this event. The sorcerer uses interpretative methods to discern the omens, methods that are practically infallible, one of the mysteries of connecting with intent. Don Juan then transitions to a story about how the spirit manifested itself to the nagual Elias. Elias was riding his horse to a city and came upon a well-dressed man in a field, who was seducing a woman's servant in the field. The man undressed and the woman responded positively. Elias thought the man insane. The two made love and Elias followed the man, who was an actor named Julian. Elias saw that Julian's energy was being drained and was mortally ill. Elias could see his death. The next day, Elias finds Julian meeting with the woman again. Elias believed something bad was going to happen. And it did. As they two started to make love, the woman began beating Julian. At the end of the attack, rather than running, she surrendered herself to him sexually, and Julian followed through with sex. After they finish, Julian has some kind of physical attack and Elias knows that he will die soon unless Elias acts. As death approached, Elias saw Julian's true nature, that of a man of many resources and capable of manifesting many faces.

The woman was walking away and as she did so, Elias realized she was so aggressive because she contained an enormous amount of extra energy. Elias then calmly goes to Julia and strikes him to move his assemblage point, to stop him from dying. The nagual then built a shack around Julia and for three months nursed him back to health. Elias also strikes the woman, who is also ill, and carries her to where Julian lay. Elias tells the landowner a lie to allow him to keep the two in his field. Over time, Elias tells them both the ways of sorcery and when Elias invites Julian to be his apprentice, Julian accepts. The woman, Talia, comes as well.



Chapter 2: The Knock of the Spirit (The Abstract)

Chapter 2: The Knock of the Spirit (The Abstract) Summary and Analysis

Carlos and don Juan return to don Juan's house after climbing down the mountain. Don Juan tells Carlos he took Carlos to the case for a reason, to move his apprentice into heightened awareness. He tells Carlos that his problem is that he's a modern, leaning heavily on "the aberrations of reason." He tries to explain the nature of intent and the abstract to Carlos and illustrates it with his story about the nagual Elias. He emphasizes that understanding the abstract cores means moving beyond the comprehensible, and Carlos is confused. Don Juan explains that the abstract cores must be understood outside of language. Don Juan tells Carlos that he asked any of the same questions and that Carlos was like Julian in personality, but that he, don Juan, was like Elias. He describes Elias as a dark and massive Indian with rough features, short, with large hands and feet, humble and wise but without flare. Elias shepherded don Juan and protected him from Julian's harsh onslaughts of insight.

Don Juan points out that Elias was both a sorcerer who interacted with people in Southern Mexico but was also a hermit in Northern Mexico. He was in two places at once through "dreaming." Don Juan distinguishes between dreamers and stalkers. Elias could project a dreaming body and be in two places at once. Dreaming is accomplished by moving one's assemblage point to one spot to which we're accustomed. Sexual energy is needed for dreaming as well. Don Juan tells Carlos that he is a dreamer and that his sexual energy will move his assemblage point if he does not control it. Don Juan implies that the reason Carlos has a hard time grasping the nature of the abstract is because he cannot properly control his energies.

Don Juan continues to describe the difficulty of grasping the abstract, arguing that it must be known non-linguistically. He argues that one cannot talk about the spirit, only experience it. Carlos finds much of the discussion frustratingly obscure. Don Juan enjoys Carlos's frustration.



Chapter 2: The Knock of the Spirit (The Last Seduction of the Nagual Julian)

Chapter 2: The Knock of the Spirit (The Last Seduction of the Nagual Julian) Summary and Analysis

The next abstract core of sorcery stories is "The Knock of the Spirit." The Manifestations of the Spirit is an edifice intent builds and invites the sorcerer to enter. But the Knock of the Spirit forces entry. Sorcerers come to recognize the Spirit's knock. To revive man's link with intent and spirit, sorcerers need a fierce purpose, a mental state known as unbending intent. Sometimes reestablishing a link with the Spirit is difficult, as it was in the case of don Juan's benefactor, the nagual Julian. Julian was a handsome child from a good family in Mexico City. He was wealthy, educated, charming and charismatic. His abilities allowed him instant gratification. But he became ill with tuberculosis. Julian joined an acting troupe that traveled the countryside and ends up in Durango, where his life ends and the spirit knocks on his door. He died in the act of seducing Talia. Julian recalls his first interaction with Elias saving him as disturbing and thought he was insane.



Chapter 3: The Trickery of the Spirit (Dusting the Link with the Spirit)

Chapter 3: The Trickery of the Spirit (Dusting the Link with the Spirit) Summary and Analysis

The third abstract core is called the "Trickery of the Spirit." It involves learning to stalk oneself or dusting off the link with intent. The Spirit has trouble reestablishing the link, so it uses trickery to shock humans. Don Juan illustrates the concept of stalking by telling Carlos the story of how Julian taught him to stalk himself. Sorcerers always begin their relationships with their apprentices with a trick, which jolts the apprentice's connection with the spirit. When don Juan was shot, Julian convinced a kind old man and his fat wife to take don Juan in. The old man was named Belisario and he claimed his wife was a healer. Belisario told don Juan that they lived in an area that belonged to a "monstrous man" who was holding them prisoner. Don Juan saw the man, greenish-gray with one eye, as big as a door, leap into the room. This jolted don Juan's connection with the spirit by shifting his assemblage point.

Julian is able to teach don Juan how to transform himself. But don Juan encounters this form of physical transformation in Belisario, who is in fact a young man pretending to be an old one. His wife was disguised as well. Belisario tells don Juan that the monster likes don Juan and wants to keep him for himself. Don Juan is devastated so Belisario suggests a way out - for don Juan to follow him to Durango to become a sorcerer. Don Juan must disguise himself as a woman. And then they plan and execute their escape from the monster. Belisario teaches don Juan to stalk by teaching him to learn all the quirks of his disguise or trick. Stalking is all about trickery. And stalking requires four qualities - being ruthless, cunning, patient and sweet. After their escape, don Juan starts to travel towards a small town, but the monster finds him and chases him. Don Juan's disguise saves him by fooling the monster. Once don Juan escapes, they spend a month traveling to Durango. During this time, Belisario teaches don Juan about the four moods of stalking. These moods are required to reach heightened awareness.



Chapter 3: The Trickery of the Spirit (The Four Moods of Stalking)

Chapter 3: The Trickery of the Spirit (The Four Moods of Stalking) Summary and Analysis

Again, the four moods of stalking are ruthlessness, cunning, patient and sweetness. The chapter opens with Carlos reflecting on the story and the four moods. He has an experience of recollecting past experiences with don Juan that are indescribable. This form of memory is distinct from normal memory and involves moving the assemblage point. Carlos and don Juan leave don Juan's house in Sonora for Nogales, Arizona, where they begin to discuss the four moods. Don Juan takes Carlos to see two men in Nogales, Silvio Manuel and Vicente Medrano. They are both sorcerers as well. He insults Carlos to his friends and they tie him up in their yard. Carlos is furious and tries to get himself out of the knots but can't. He demands they tell him why they tied him up. They respond by saying that they did it to see what kind of man he was. They wanted to know which of the four moods Carlos possesses. But he has none of them because he is a "kind-sized indulger." They tell him that he must learn the four moods. Sorcerers must act maliciously but not for their own gain to shock people into connections with the spirit. To learn to stalk, don Juan tells Carlos, he must learn to stalk himself in the four moods. The moods are required to enter into a behavior that is neither petty nor capricious, that combines morality and beauty. Then one can move one's assemblage point and become a sorcerer. They do so through stalking or "controlled folly making." This discussion pushes Carlos into a higher state of awareness where he cannot articulate his experiences and realizes later that he can no longer remember. Silvio screams "Intent" to cause Carlos to recollect. In this moment, he understood what intent was and that knowledge of it could not be communicated in words. Carlos wonders whether intent is God, but they laughed and disagreed because God could be described and represented while intent could not. The recollection exhausts Carlos. Don Juan helps him to sleep to return to normal awareness.



Chapter 4: The Descent of the Spirit (Seeing the Spirit)

Chapter 4: The Descent of the Spirit (Seeing the Spirit) Summary and Analysis

Don Juan tells Carlos they are to spend the night at a sorcerer's case in total darkness to have the rock formation and the sorcerers' intent to move his assemblage point. Don Juan tells Carlos that he only has a problem understanding the spirit when he thinks about it. He then tells Carlos about the fourth abstract core, "The Descent of the Spirit," where the spirit reveals itself to people. Sorcerers should have clear memories of crossing over into this new perceptual threshold to be able to recollect one's potential. In this abstract core, the spirit cuts one's self-reflection. Self-reflection imprisons us and the spirit sets us free from self-reflection. Sorcerers try to move beyond this concern. Don Juan recalls that the nagual Elias was an excellent dreamer and stalker. He had saved Julian by dreaming of him, seeing him and stalking him. Elias saw that Julian would have died unless he plugged the energy hole out of which Julian's life force was draining. Elias demonstrated this ability to Julian. Elias also moved Julian and Talia into a heightened state of awareness to shift their assemblage points. In this state of awareness, Julian and Talia saw the spirit.

The story ends and Carlos nearly falls asleep. He begins to have a vision of a beautiful landscape. Don Juan wordlessly tells Carlos that his assemblage point has moved. Carlos was viewing the Eagle's emanations. Carlos awakens and realizes he is surrounded by incredible darkness but recalls his vision. Julian had seen the same prairie landscape when he came to the case. This was the state of dreaming. Don Juan argues that the universe is composed of energy fields like filaments of ordinary light, but they are nothing compared to the Eagle's emanations. Seeing occurs when intent energizes and lights up an energy field. Alignment is when two energy fields are combined and brighten. The force that lights up the fields is known as will. Our flaw as humans is that we are unaware of how disconnected we are. Don Juan believes that humanity was once in a Garden-of-Eden-type state where they were connected to intent, but this connection was lost and sorcerers tried to rediscover it. As this story ends, Carlos begins to cry as he shifts into a normal state of awareness. Carlos is upset because he is going to lose his ability to understand Don Juan.



Chapter 4: The Descent of the Spirit (The Somersault of Thought)

Chapter 4: The Descent of the Spirit (The Somersault of Thought) Summary and Analysis

Don Juan and Carlos return to don Juan's house. They begin to discuss intent, but Carlos cannot recall intent as he wishes he could, which upsets him. Don Juan encourages him to calm down and accept that he will come back to these memories only over the years. They discuss stalking as a way to handle Carlos's frustration at being unable to recall and experience his connection with intent. This requires stalking, which is a secretive, furtive, deceptive behavior designed to deliver a jolt. When you stalk yourself, you jolt yourself. The best way to stalk oneself is to die, and so the idea of death is crucial to the life of a sorcerer. Don Juan argues that death is not an enemy but rather a challenge to live a life of freedom in contact with intent. Death can stop challenging sorcerers when they take "a somersault into the inconceivable." But Carlos does not understand this saying. Don Juan says that this somersault breaks perceptual barriers and man's perception reaches its limits.

Don Juan and Carlos decide to walk around town. They discuss the idea of pure understanding which arrives only after the somersault of thought. But the concept remains obscure.



Chapter 4: The Descent of the Spirit (Moving the Assemblage Point)

Chapter 4: The Descent of the Spirit (Moving the Assemblage Point) Summary and Analysis

Don Juan and Carlos return to the mountains a few days later. Don Juan quizzes Carlos on the nature of ruthlessness, but Carlos cannot recall what he knows. He emphasizes that the first principle of sorcery is not moving the assemblage point, although it happens first. It is the ruthlessness of sorcery. Ruthlessness requires the banishment of doubt from the mind, which then makes anything possible.

Carlos is reminded of a surgical operation he saw in Mexico City, performed by a famous psychic healer. He tells don Juan about the experience of watching the healer remove a man's diseased liver, wash it in a bucket of alcohol and then replace it. Carlos was skeptical that there was a sleight of hand. Yet the patient got better. Don Juan suggests that the healer was capable of moving the assemblage point. The healer had the power to remove doubt from the mind of the sick. As they continue to talk, Carlos finds his mind shifting between incredible clarity and mental fatigue. Don Juan explains that this is the result of a slight fluctuation in his assemblage point, due to left over self-pity. Don Juan then teaches Carlos that he must move away from this, to "the place of no pity," which will allow Carlos to become ruthless.

Don Juan next tries to awaken Carlos, to cause him to recollect the first time he reached the place of no pity. Don Juan then stares at Carlos intently to cause him to look inside of himself, trying to help him move his assemblage point but don Juan resists. Carlos asks don Juan what he gets out of their interactions. Don Juan warns Carlos that he won't like the answer. But Carlos badgers him. Don Juan, it turns out, finds Carlos so repulsive that it nauseates don Juan. Don Juan has to transform himself daily just to spend time with Carlos, and it is a challenge. Don Juan says that Carlos is petty, wasteful, opinionated, coercive, short-tempered, conceited, morose, ponderous, ungrateful, self-indulgent and - worse of all - possesses an exalted idea of himself "with nothing whatever to back it up." He tells Carlos this to change his perspective and to continue to prepare him to learn to be ruthless. He tells Carlos about Carlos's true personality in order to expose his personality masks, to find his inner ruthlessness. Carlos protests that don Juan does what he does because he wants to help Carlos understand, but don Juan denies this. He only appears to be caring and reasonable because of his mask. Really his reasonableness is his utter lack of pity.



Chapter 4: The Descent of the Spirit (The Place of No Pity)

Chapter 4: The Descent of the Spirit (The Place of No Pity) Summary and Analysis

Don Juan and Carlos are at the edge of Guaymas, in northern Mexico, on their way to Nogales, Arizona. Carlos sees that there is something wrong with don Juan. He appears to be having a stroke. Carlos stops his car and drags don Juan out of the car. They walk into a restaurant don Juan knows, where people recognize him, but only as the old man he appears to be due to his ailment or apparent stroke. They eat and return to the car. As they drive, don Juan asks Carlos to take him to a store where people know him. He gave Carlos bad directions. Carlos becomes nervous and exhausted as time goes on and he cannot find the store. Don Juan is becoming hateful to Carlos. When they stop, don Juan gets up and walks away. Carlos tries to help don Juan walk and pities him. But then don Juan slaps Carlos twice, full of rage. Don Juan claims not to know who Carlos is and yells out to people to save him. Some townspeople try to corner him and Carlos takes off for his life. He escaped but cannot get back to his car. He devises a plan to buy some tourist gifts and walk inconspicuously back to his car. Don Juan is waiting for him. Carlos feels cold towards him. He felt no hatred or anger or annoyance. He had a "frightening lack of pity." Don Juan shakes his body and then returns to his old self and helps Carlos into the car. Don Juan shoos away the police and townspeople. Don Juan had been giving Carlos a lesson in ruthlessness by pushing him to the place of no pity. As don Juan explains, Carlos finds that he cannot focus. He discovers a dualism within himself - an old, at ease, indifferent part and a light, new, fluffy, agitated part. Carlos found that this latter part was the part he used to view the world. Carlos describes himself to don Juan, that Carlos has lost his solidity. Don Juan says that when the assemblage point moves as it was for Carlos and it reaches the place of no pity, rationality and common sense become weak. And older, more ancient part of the self comes to the surface. The knowledge of dualism is silent knowledge and signals the presence of intent.

They continue back to the house and Carlos falls out of his state of heightened consciousness. This shift exhausts him. This leads don Juan to talk about the difference between ancient and modern man. Ancient man simply acted non-reflectively, but modern man is too self-reflective and creates despair and self-destruction. To find peace and freedom, one must move one's assemblage point away from self-reflection. Self-reflection leads to self-pity, which is the source of man's misery. The nagual, by contrast, lets the spirit guide his actions. The chapter ends as don Juan defends his ruthlessness. He claims that ruthlessness is not cruelty. It is the opposite of self-pity or self-importance. Instead, ruthlessness is a form of sobriety.



Chapter 5: The Requirements of Intent (Breaking the Mirror of Self-Reflection)

Chapter 5: The Requirements of Intent (Breaking the Mirror of Self-Reflection) Summary and Analysis

Don Juan and Carlos spend the night in the spot where he remembered his experience in Guaymas. That night, don Juan helps Carlos reach new assemblage point positions. But the next day, Carlos cannot remember what happened. Don Juan refused to tell Carlos what happened, saying only that he would one day remember. After discussing the geographical rock formations that help to move assemblage points, don Juan tells Carlos that the nagual aims to shatter the mirror of self-reflection. They argue about whether one can learn on one's own to move the assemblage point but do not resolve matters. Don Juan insists that all movements of the assemblage point require the spirit. The two discuss Carlos's mask. Carlos maintains that he is still a generous anthropologist, but don Juan claims that since his assemblage point has moved, he is a sorcerer. Don Juan aims to break Carlos's sense of his own personality's continuity. He introduces a "dissonant element" into Carlos's psyche, what is called "not-doing," where one ceases to be a self-reflector. This was the point of the trip to the store where don Juan appears as an old man - he aimed to introduce not-doing into Carlos's mind. He emphasizes that rationality is only a veneer that covers the human. In fact, humans are part of the mysterious. Don Juan tried to puncture his rationality at the store but he could only do so by bringing Carlos to the place of no pity. Carlos accepts this explanation and realizes that his assemblage point is allowing him to develop a new form of continuity—a strange, detached hardness that became his normal mode of behavior.



Chapter 5: The Requirements of Intent (The Ticket to Impeccability)

Chapter 5: The Requirements of Intent (The Ticket to Impeccability) Summary and Analysis

Man warriors find themselves stuck between being average men and sorcerers, although they all know that they are moving in the sorcerer direction. But the mirror of self-reflection holds them back. To abandon the mirror of self-reflection, the sorcerer must become impeccable. Don Juan tells Carlos the story of how he came to impeccability, through his own death.

We return to the time in Durango where don Juan is dressed in women's clothes. He ends up at a hacienda where the monstrous man cannot find him. The hacienda housed seven beautiful women who care for don Juan for the next several days waiting for Belisario to return, but he does not. Don Juan, fearing the monstrous man, asks to stay, and the women agree so long as he obeys the rules without explanation. A few weeks later Belisario returns, but apparently the man Belisario was a disguise for the nagual Julian, who owned the hacienda. Julian tells don Juan that he must become an apprentice. To continue to live at the hacienda, don Juan must work hard and avoid having a bad attitude, but he develops a sulkiness over time that is unpleasant to the other members of the house. The women want to send him away, but Julian prevents them because don Juan still sees the monster (although no one else in the house can). They decided to keep him but on the condition his attitude changes. It turns out later that one of the women in the house is Talia; she teaches him to read and write.

The nagual Julian begins to teach don Juan the ways of sorcery, but he does so through playing tricks and jokes on don Juan. After some study of sorcery, don Juan is one day overcome with a desire to leave the area of the land where the monster could not enter. He sees the monster from afar and begins to approach him, but the monster dissipates into a mist. Don Juan realizes that Julian and the women knew that the monster did not exist and had used him anyway. When he confronts Julia, Julian apologizes and explains that the monster was a manifestation of don Juan's fear. Don Juan decides to leave the hacienda.

He next travels to Mazatlan and becomes a muleteer and regularly travels between Durango and Mazatlan. Eventually he develops a strong desire to go north and journeys there and meets a woman, a Yaqui Indian widow with children. He became a husband and a father. He spent years as a family man, and while he was often happy he knew something was wrong. He began to lose his dynamism and energy. His family lived in abysmal poverty, from which he could not liberate them. Don Juan decides that he must make a "total recapitulation" of his life in order to find peace and freedom but that dying was the only way to accomplish this. So he begins to wait for his death, and his family waits with him. One day, don Juan finds work as a temporary farm worker. A few days



later someone steals his hat and he has no protection from the sun. The workers tease him when he constructs a hat out of straw, and they would not stop. Eventually the foreman fires don Juan. He is enraged and starts to attack one of the men. But he stops himself, goes to the edge of the field and breaks down in despair. Don Juan then receives something the nagual Julian called "the silent protector," a surge of energy that told him he would die soon. He realized that his life had become petty and foolish. He lets go of these concerns and an immense wave of energy comes over him and killed him.

There the story ended. Don Juan says that they will analyze it later. He emphasizes that the sorcerer's search for assuredness and awareness is incredibly painful, often to the point of death. This process of invalidation that don Juan experienced is calls the ticket to impeccability. Don Juan maintains that he really died in the field, that he had a near death experience, but that the Eagle sent him back. He found himself in a shallow grave a day later, got up and left. His family was nowhere to be found, which grieved him. But he knew he had to return to the nagual Julian. Julian told him that the secret to freedom for the sorcerer is death.



Chapter 6: Handling Intent (The Third Point)

Chapter 6: Handling Intent (The Third Point) Summary and Analysis

Don Juan took Carlos and his other apprentices to a western range nearby, and Carlos spontaneously begins to have a recollection. Don Juan and Carlos had been in the state of Chihuahua in the desert. Don Juan emphasizes moving the assemblage point to achieve heightened awareness, and Carlos thinks he is repeating himself. Don Juan argues that repetition helps one develop silent knowledge, a "general position of the assemblage point" that was once man's normal position. The forerunner to silent knowledge was "the place of no pity" position of the assemblage point. The forerunner of reason was the assemblage point called "the place of concern." This dualism led to humanity's current spiritual conflict.

Don Juan and Carlos immediately notice a jaguar. They attempt to walk away from it, but it follows them. During the attempt to escape, which takes hours, the two discuss methods of avoiding attack. Don Juan emphasizes that if they are rational, the jaguar will predict their behavior. So he suggests that they become less rational. They still have trouble shaking the jaguar. When they finally find a hiding place to rest, they begin to quarrel. Don Juan encourages Carlos to recount a story from his childhood and Carlos obliges. Carlos played soccer when he was young and found himself extremely agile and fast. He discovered that he could play pranks and then by running fast enough, he could escape the consequences. But one day, he meets his match in a young policeman who used to play football. Carlos told Don Juan that Don Juan's physical prowess made him feel like the policeman did when he was a child. Don Juan points out that both he and the policeman shattered his sense of invincibility. They then turn to discuss death, which Don Juan argues is kind and sweet for the sorcerer. Sorcerers, Carlos discovered, command their deaths, rather than allowing them to happen. They died "only when they had to."

This leads to more concern about avoiding the jaguar. Don Juan helps Carlos to move his assemblage point to where he feels gigantic and ferocious. He is able to see the jaguar now as if he were incredibly tall. Don Juan tells Carlos that he can now move his assemblage point, moving beyond where most men ever venture. Carlos's reasoning faculties ceased to function and he found himself feeling an intense exhilaration. When his thinking began to function, they had been running and walking for over two hours. Don Juan chides him for reveling in the pleasure of moving his assemblage point. He should have taken them toward the mountains. The jaguar was still after them.

Carlos takes several hours to recall the details of the experience with the jaguar. Eventually Carlos falls asleep. When he awakes he recounts some of the story to Don Juan and they agree that his accomplishment was intending the movement of his



assemblage point. Don Juan then points out the great advantage of moving the assemblage point is that it breaks one free of one's ordinary humanity. Many events can break one from ordinary humanity, but the preferred method of the sorcerer is unbending intent, or a single-mindedness, a well-defined purpose. Unbending intent requires getting a third point of reference on one's action, beyond our regular two points of reference. Points of reference are typically derived from the senses, but to reach a third point we must perceive two places at the same time. Don Juan points Carlos back to the two times Carlos experienced divided perception, with Carlos's experience of his own dualism and his experience with the jaguar. Don Juan believes that the spirit used the jaguar to help Carlos reconnect with intent. The third point of reference Carlos achieved is the freedom of perception; it is intent; it is the spirit, the somersault of thought into the miraculous.



Chapter 6: Handling Intent (The Two One-Way Bridges)

Chapter 6: Handling Intent (The Two One-Way Bridges) Summary and Analysis

Carlos is euphoric about his experience with divided reference points. Don Juan tells him that a warrior passes through four stages in his connection with intent. First, he has a rusty, weak link, then he cleans the link; next he learns to manipulate it, and finally he accepts the designs of the abstract. He emphasizes that learning to maintain the link is up to the spirit. He says that impeccability is not religious morality, but rather the best use of one's energy level.

Don Juan returns to telling the story of his stay with Julian. Other visitors came to stay with Julian, but don Juan thought he was superior to them. Julian and don Juan develop an odd relationship, where Julian appears to seek don Juan's trust but continues to trick him. One day, Julian and the seven women plan a picnic to the river. Julian then makes a brief speech and asks don Juan if he wants to find out what the spirit is. Don Juan says yes and Julian threw him into the river behind them. Don Juan thought that he was going to die and tried to escape, but he could not. His anguish from being in the water, however, had the effect of acting as a "bridge between the two Juan Matuses." He alternated between two places in the river and ceased to be afraid. He found himself near one side of the river five miles downstream and he found that he had reached the place of silent knowledge. He then walks home but decided to visit the nagual Elias rather than Julian. Elias was excited by don Juan's story, in part because the story helps don Juan to understand how to stalk himself and how to wake up intent. Silent knowledge is a third point beyond the second point - the place of no pity. Elias believed don Juan's accomplishment was magnificent. Elias said that most of humanity was stuck on the first point, reason, but that he had broken through.



Chapter 6: Handling Intent (Intending Appearances)

Chapter 6: Handling Intent (Intending Appearances) Summary and Analysis

Don Juan tells Carlos not to write anything down about their experiences yet but to store information in his assemblage point, giving Carlos's recollections as examples. Intensity allows the sorcerers to recollect from his assemblage point, which is contained in the shine of the sorcerer's eyes. Using more energy than usual is intensity. Sorcerers use their intense experiences to stalk themselves. And they can combine the moods of stalking by intending these natural positions of the assemblage point. He returns to the subject of controlled folly, describing it as an art that is hard to learn. He goes on to describe the stalkers' classification of personalities - assistants, the self-centered, and the indifferent. The middle type are called "farts" of which don Juan and Carlos are members. He then reviews the basic cores - the manifestations of the spirit, the knock of the spirit, the trickery of the spirit, the descent of the spirit, the requirement of intent, and handling intent. And he makes Carlos store the information in the intensity of the moment.

The nagual Julian taught don Juan that there were three ways to defeat self-importance - gradual, reaching the place of no pity, and symbolic death. Julian recommended the last option. Julian was generally interested in breaking his apprentices' sense of continuity in order to push them into higher states of awareness. Don Juan tells a story of how Julian used Tulio, an unsociable member of the household, to shatter don Juan's sense of continuity. Up until that time, he had found Tulio contemptible and arrogant. He thought the others in the house felt the same way. But Tulio seemed to have lots of influence in the house nonetheless. Julian and Tulio begin to have a dispute over bookkeeping. During a lull in the dispute, Julian summons don Juan to find Tulio and bring him to Julian. Don Juan is excited by the tension between them and a chance to ingratiate himself to Julian. Don Juan goes out to find Tulio and finds him, oddly, talking a lot. He then insists that Tulio come inside, but Tulio begins to uncharacteristically scream at him. Don Juan ran back to the house, only to find Tulio at the front door. Don Juan asked Tulio again to go see Julian; Tulio tells him to go to hell, and don Juan is furious. He goes to Julian's office and finds Tulio in the office and then goes to find Julian at the other end of the house, only to find Tulio there again. Don Juan is bewildered. Julian asks to be alone with Tulio and don Juan goes back outside, only to find Tulio there again. Don Juan is now suspicious, finds his horse, and attempts to track down Tulio outside. He knew Julian was playing a joke on him. He finds Julian and Julian tells him to go to the shed; he finds four Tulios in the shed. They then attack him but without hurting him. Julian then explained to don Juan that these four men were stalkers. Elias had taught them this, as an exercise in "controlled folly." Their names were one, two, three and four in Spanish - Tuliuno, Tuliudo, Tuliitre and Tulicuatro. They



were not identical, but they were close. They had spent years practicing to look like one another and fool don Juan into thinking that they were one person. The experience forced him into the place of no pity, moving his assemblage point. The other members of the house had deceived him, but they had done so on the command of the spirit. The Tulios were told by the spirit to intend their homogeneity. They then practiced to develop their ability to be identical to one another.

Don Juan and Carlos begin to discuss the lesson from this. Carlos finds that don Juan appears to believe in evil, something he previously denied. But don Juan argues that evil is simply masked stupidity. Naguals, therefore, must guide awareness. He then claims that sorcerers can attain the awareness that others only attain through death. The energy to reach freedom is available in this life. With this, the book ends. Don Juan suggests that Carlos return to L.A. and allow his assemblage point a break. He advises Carlos to think about the basic cores of sorcery, or instead, to not think about them but make his assemblage point move to the place of silent knowledge. He admonishes Carlos to close the door of self-reflection, be impeccable and that he will then have the energy to find the place of silent knowledge.



Characters

Carlos Castaneda

Carlos Castaneda is the main character of *THE POWER OF SILENCE*. He narrates his experiences with his teacher, the nagual don Juan Matus. Carlos is an anthropology graduate student at UCLA who is attempting to understand the millennial-old practice of sorcery among the descendants of the Toltec people. He begins knowing very little about the ways of sorcery, stuck in what don Juan calls the "mirror of self-reflection." Carlos must journey with don Juan and study intensely under him in order to learn about the art of sorcery and move away from the preoccupations with self that afflict him and the rest of humanity.

Don Juan does his best to teach Carlos, despite secretly finding Carlos's personality repulsive. At one point in the book, Don Juan tells Carlos that he is petty, wasteful, opinionated, coercive, short-tempered, conceited, morose, ponderous, ungrateful, self-indulgent and - worst of all - possesses an exalted idea of himself "with nothing whatever to back it up." Carlos must learn the six abstract cores in order to develop as a human being. This process of learning is complex, and much happens to Carlos as a result. He experiences a variety of visions and receives teachings that he immediately forgets and must later recall. He is forcibly pushed into altered states of awareness and eventually learns to do this for himself. He had intense dreams where he has significant, altered perceptions. He is tricked by don Juan twice in ways that deeply upset him. He argues with don Juan constantly about the nature of sorcery and even experiences himself as a giant, stalking a jaguar. He is not allowed to record his interactions with don Juan until he has finished his training and reached what don Juan calls "the place of silent knowledge," or where he understands the abstract cores non-linguistically. Eventually, Carlos writes a series of books about his encounters. This book is listed as a non-fiction work; Castaneda claims that these experiences are all genuine. But the foregoing decades have shown that don Juan Matus was not a real person and that these stories are in fact works of fiction.

The Nagual don Juan Matus

Don Juan Matus is the other main character of *THE POWER OF SILENCE*. Don Juan is a Mexican Indian Sorcerer who teaches Carlos the ways of the nagual. The nagual worldview holds that the world contains great bands of energy that emanate from a kind of world spirit. It manifests itself in a force known as intent. The center of energy in the universe is a God-like power known as the Eagle. Humans are simply concentrations of energy and power, places where energy bands intersect. The center point of their energy bands is called "the assemblage point." The assemblage point dictates the state of awareness in which each person exists.



Don Juan was brought to Nagualism by his benefactor, the nagual Julian and his benefactor, the nagual Elias. Don Juan began life as an ordinary Mexican Indian, who through a series of unusual events, came to meet the nagual Julian. He is trained in sorcery by living at the nagual Julian's hacienda and learning the craft by suffering trickery at the hands of his benefactor. Over time, he learns to master his craft and take on apprentices of his own. Don Juan is a mysterious figure, full of wisdom, but is often deliberately ruthless and merciless in his treatment of Carlos, often insulting him, mocking him and deceiving him in order to teach him the nature of Nagualism and intent. Don Juan compares himself to the nagual Elias, who wears a mask of wisdom and reasonableness, which hides a true personality of indifference. He finds Carlos repulsive but teaches him in order to force himself (don Juan) to transform his reactions and strengthen his link with intent. Don Juan desires to teach Carlos the six abstract cores of Nagualism through the book. He mostly accomplishes this through telling Carlos stories that alter Carlos's awareness in order to reestablish his link with intent.

The Nagual Julian

The nagual Julian was don Juan's benefactor and teacher. Before Julian was a nagual, he was a handsome actor who nearly died during a sexual encounter with a woman named Talia. The nagual Elias, his benefactor, revived him over a three-month period and trained him. He then acquires a hacienda where he trains other naguals, including don Juan. He was famous for his ability to morph and change his appearance, along with his penchant for particularly vicious forms of trickery in order to alter his apprentices' awareness.

The Nagual Elias

The nagual Elias was an old Yaqui Indian nagual who trained the nagual Julian and had a major impact on don Juan Matus. He was a hermit who lived in a cave in Northern Mexico but had the ability to project a three-dimensional image of himself far away into Southern Mexico. He was a legendary stalker and dreamer. He saved the nagual Julian's life and helped don Juan understand the significance of the nagual Julian's teachings.

Vicente Medrano

A companion nagual to don Juan who helps to train Carlos.

Silvio Manuel

Another nagual companion of don Juan's who helps to train Carlos.



Talia

The woman who nearly killed the nagual Julian during a sexual encounter. She nearly dies as well, but the nagual Elias revives her and Julian. She then comes to live with the nagual Julian, along with many others, at his hacienda. She is a person of extremely high energy.

Rosendo

The nagual Rosendo was the nagual Elias's teacher.

Belisario

An old man don Juan meets in his travels who turns out to be the nagual Julian in disguise.

Tulio

An unsociable man who lives at the nagual Julian's hacienda. He rarely speaks until an encounter with don Juan. Don Juan later finds out that Tulio is in fact four men blending their behaviors into one another in order to learn the art of stalking and push don Juan to higher forms of awareness. For the Spanish numbers uno, dos, tres, and cuatro, they were named Tuliuno, Tuliado, Tuliore, and Tuliocuatro.

The Seven Beautiful Women

Women who lived with the nagual Julian and practiced sorcery. They initially object to don Juan's presence in the hacienda.

The Monstrous Man

A green-tinted monster who follows don Juan to Julian's hacienda, which he cannot enter. He later turns out to be a figment of don Juan's imagination, a manifestation of his inner fear.

The Jaguar

A jaguar that hunts don Juan and Carlos during a trip to the mountains. Don Juan uses the experience to train Carlos to shift his assemblage point.



Objects/Places

The Eagle

In the nagual worldview, the Eagle is the source of all energy in the universe and the ultimate source of freedom and manifestation of the primary force of the universe, intent. It is akin to a God-figure, but is too mysterious to be described.

Intent

In the nagual worldview, intent is the major underlying feature of reality, a mental force that organizes the energy of the universe. The only way to achieve happiness and tranquility in life is to reestablish one's link with intent and spend one's life strengthening it.

The Assemblage Point

Each person has an assemblage point, which is the focal point of each individual's energy bands, the core of being. Reestablishing one's relationship with intent requires moving one's assemblage point. The nagual specializes in the methods of moving the assemblage point.

The Place of No Pity/Silent Knowledge

The place of no pity or silent knowledge is a position of the assemblage point where one feels no pity for anything and silently knows the nature of intent and the abstract cores of knowledge about intent. It is contrasted with the place of concern and reason, where men self-reflect and lose their connection with intent.

Mountains of Southern Mexico

The story beings here. Don Juan and Carlos spend much of their time in the mountains, where Carlos learns the way of the nagual.

Ancient Caves

Caves designed by nature and the ancient naguals to move the assemblage point. Carlos and don Juan often camp there.



Nogales

A border town between Arizona and Mexico where don Juan tricks Carlos into moving his assemblage point to the place of no pity.

Oaxaca

The state from which the nagual Elias comes.

Chihuahua

Another Mexican state where a variety of events take place.

Sonora

Like Chihuahua, a Mexican state where several of the book's events occur.

Don Juan's House

The home of don Juan, where many of the important conversations between don Juan and Carlos take place.

Julian's Hacienda

Julian's estate where don Juan lives for several years and learns the ways of the nagual. Julian lives there with seven beautiful women and the unsociable man/men Tulio, along with Julian's other apprentices.

Durango

A city in Mexico where don Juan finds a job as a muleteer and meets his wife.

The Eagle's Emanations

The Eagle's energy bands comprise the whole world. They are bands of energy. While sleeping in one of the ancient caves, Carlos sees the Eagle's emanations directly.

Guaymas

A port city where some of the book's events take place.

Sinaloa

A Mexican state where don Juan died.



Themes

The Abstract Cores

The main theme of THE POWER OF SILENCE is that of the six abstract cores. The abstract cores are types of knowledge. They are non-linguistic, "silent" knowledge that cannot always be recalled, at least not until one's assemblage point shifts to the place of silent knowledge. The abstract cores are knowledge of the nature of intent and how to revive one's connection with it. The abstract cores are successive in nature. The first must be grasped before the second and the second before the third. There are six abstract cores: (a) the manifestations of the spirit, (b) the knock of the spirit, (c) the trickery of the spirit, (d) the descent of the spirit, (e) the requirements of intent, and (f) handling intent. Each abstract core is initiated by the spirit, which invites the person to respond by moving his/her assemblage point. The manifestations of the spirit are when the spirit builds an edifice through which the person can reestablish a lost link with intent. The knock of the spirit is when the spirit reignites the person's link with intent. The trickery of the spirit attempts to undermine the individual's natural resistance to linking with intent and cause one to move one's assemblage point on one's own. The spirit resorts to trickery only because it is the spirit's best method. The descent of the spirit is when one's assemblage point has moved and the spirit's link with the individual begins to be dusted off. The requirements of intent are the requirements for maintaining and strengthening one's connection with intent. Handling intent is about how to use and respond to intent when appropriate. Each of the abstract cores is required to have each human move towards a new assemblage point, which is a point of constant connection with intent. This is required to enter into a new state of freedom and tranquility where one is freed from the slavery of reason, self-reflection and self-pity.

Freedom and Slavery

Nagualism is an ideology and a world view. It is supernaturalist or postulates a world of mental entities beyond what can be described by physics. The root of reality is the force of intent and the emanations of the Eagle. In an original period of humanity, all humans were naturally connected with intent, but this knowledge has been lost. Humans have moved their assemblage points to a point of reason and have lost silent knowledge. Their assemblage points are in a place of concern and self-reflection. Humans focus on themselves and try to force the world to conform to their own modes of thought. They become alienated from abstract reality and unable to conceive of reality accurately. As a result, they become caught up in ordinary, concrete, particular forms of life. The demands of work, money, bodily pleasure, fame, fortune and even family divide humanity from intent by preventing humans from reestablishing their relationship with intent. This is a form of slavery. Humanity is enslaved to the mirror of self-reflection, the excessive focus of humans on their own interests and their rejection of a life built around ultimate reality.



The six abstract cores bring freedom and liberation. An individual is only truly free when that individual can manipulate its own assemblage point and have command over its own energies and perception of ultimate reality. Freedom is liberation not only from self-reflection and the mundane practices of life but from having one's energy level and direction dictated by outside forces. Nagualism, the pursuit of the abstract cores, makes the individual autonomous over one's very being and soul. Don Juan Matus preaches a gospel of liberation from self and self-reflection, as so many other religions do. The point of sorcery is freedom and pursuing the happiness and tranquility that follows this liberation. Carlos is led constantly by don Juan to overcome the chains of self-reflection with which his own desires and ideology has imprisoned him. Carlos is dominated by vice and self-deception. He is focused on appearing reasonable and generous, but he must become ruthless and pitiless in order to reestablish his link with intent and achieve true freedom by reconnecting with intent, the ultimate ground of being.

The Fall and Rebirth

Many religions have a concept of humanity's fall from perfection. In the days of yore, humanity was perfect, happy, connected with their creator, and so on. Nagualism is no different from other world views and ideologies. It postulates an ancient origin of humanity where humans had only silent knowledge and did not self-reflect. The original state of the human was more like that of animals. They did not exercise an explicit use of reasoning and did not exercise their capacity to focus on themselves and their ability to conform themselves to reason. This was a superior state because it kept the individual's assemblage point at the place of no pity/silent knowledge which maintained humanity's connection with intent. When humanity began to focus on themselves and exercise the use of reason, their connection with intent is severed because their assemblage point moves to the place of concern and self-reflection. In many ways, the beginning of humanity's fall is similar to the beginning of the Christian story but rather than the acquisition of moral knowledge against God's will leading to the Fall, it is the use of explicit reason and self-reflection. And much like philosopher G.W.F. Hegel's story, where Geist conceives of itself and its opposite, non-being, which generates the first contradiction. This contradiction pushes forward the conflicts of history and the human is sent into internal contradiction and alienation from the source of its being by self-reflection and the move to attempt to conform reality to reason in a way that is impossible (although on Hegel's view, this is possible at the end of history).

The purpose of Christianity is to reconcile man to God through the rebirth of the human; the purpose of the Hegelian picture of history is to reconcile humanity to itself and nature through the evolution of human institutions in history, so nagualism involves a kind of reconciliation and rebirth as well. The reconciliation occurs between the human and the source of its being, intent and the Eagle. It is achieved by the study of the abstract cores and reestablishing the individual's link with intent. While the spirit must initiate contact, the individual must not resist. The spirit will pursue the individual but will not force the individual to accept it, much like the role of the Holy Spirit in Roman Catholic theology. Rebirth occurs when the link with intent is reestablished, and the apprentice sorcerer undergoes a symbolic death. Again, much like the great world

religions, new life and reconciliation to humanity's source requires the individual to spiritually die, if not physically die.

Style

Perspective

The perspective of *THE POWER OF SILENCE* is in the first-person. It is narrated by Carlos Castaneda, the well-known writer, cult figure and anthropologist who is at this time an anthropology graduate student at UCLA. He is studying ancient Indian sorcery practices under an Indian sorcerer known as don Juan Matus. Don Juan treats Carlos as a nagual apprentice, communicating to him the abstract cores of silent knowledge, which reestablishes his link with intent. Carlos's perspective is often confused because it jumps between various stories and times, only indirectly communicating the core concepts of the book. It is mostly a recounting Carlos's experience with Don Juan, but it also jumps to narrate in the third-person at various points. Carlos recounts stories that don Juan tells him of don Juan's life experiences and his apprenticeship to the life experiences of don Juan's benefactor, the nagual Julian. He even recounts stories concerning the nagual Julian's benefactor, the nagual Elias. In these stories, Carlos recounts as clearly as he can the story that don Juan communicated to him. Carlos's biases are heavily in favor of the nagual don Juan, almost honoring him. Of course, Carlos reports his disagreements with don Juan but these are apparently regarded as deriving from arrogance and ignorance even if they derive from an honest place in Carlos's heart. Carlos typically acts from the standpoint of an anthropologist and scientist in the book, but he is clearly writing from a position that is more advanced and in line with nagualism.

Tone

The tone of *THE POWER OF SILENCE* is partly that of a graduate student report. It attempts to directly report the data without judging it. It gives the author's train of thought without apologizing for it and reports all the behaviors of the main characters, warts and all. Castaneda only gives us his view from within the story and does not explicitly state what he believes as a writer of the book. The tone of the book then attempts to be very objective; however, as one learns more about the author, a bias comes through. The real man Carlos Castaneda claimed that *THE POWER OF SILENCE* and his other writings of his time with don Juan were genuine. To this day, *THE POWER OF SILENCE* is marketed as a non-fiction book, although it has been clear for over two decades that *THE POWER OF SILENCE* is fraudulent. Many of don Juan's supposed quotes are derived from important other thinkers, such as Wittgenstein and C.S. Lewis. It is not clear whether don Juan Matus even existed. Thus, the tone must be understood as wholly deceptive in nature. It is presented impartially but appears to be a complete forgery and fabrication. The author intends to deceive his audience and while he never admitted this intent during his life, ample evidence from other sources shows this.



Structure

The book is not structured chronologically; instead, it is organized into an introduction, which explains the philosophy of nagualism, and six chapters, each of which covers the six abstract cores of knowledge that lead the way towards reigniting a connection with intent. The book is composed of sub-chapters, each of which meditates on a different aspect of the abstract core. Five of the abstract cores have two sub-chapters, but the abstract core "The Descent of the Spirit," has four sub-chapters indicating that it is a more complex lesson. The sub-chapters are not explicit explanations of the six abstract cores. Only the introduction lays out the key ideas in a logical format. Don Juan insists throughout the book that the abstract cores are not a form of proposition or linguistic knowledge, so they cannot be communicated directly; instead, they must be communicated through stories, visions and experiences. The book is structured such that each sub-chapter contains either a lesson taught directly to Carlos, through a journey or vision, or the recounting of a story of don Juan's experiences of the experiences of his teachers, the nagual Julian and the nagual Elias. Thus the book is mostly the teachings of don Juan directly to Carlos and indirectly through don Juan's stories.



Quotes

"Human beings are born with a finite amount of energy ... an energy that is systematically deployed, beginning at the moment of birth, in order that it may be used most advantageously by the modality of time." (9)

"Sorcery is a state of awareness. Sorcery is the ability to perceive something which ordinary perception cannot." (10)

"For you, writing should not be a literary exercise, but rather an exercise in sorcery." (14)

"Sorcerers are vitally concerns with the past." (22)

"The entire truth is that the spirit reveals itself to everyone with the same intensity and consistency, but only sorcerers, and naguals in particular, are attuned to such revelations." (34)

"My benefacator was a modern nagual, involved in the pursuit of freedom" (47)

"Knowledge and language are separate." (57)

"The first core, the Manifestations of the Spirit, is the edifice that intent builds and places before a sorcerer, then invites him to enter." (60)

"It is called the trickery of the spirit, or the trickery of the abstract, or stalking oneself, or dusting the link." (72)

"Egomania is a real tyrant. We must work ceaselessly to dethrone it." (93)

"And then I understood not only why heightened awareness was the portal of intent, but I also understood what intent was." (105)

"I want you to go to hell!" (159)

"Ruthlessness is the opposite of self-pity or self-importance. Ruthlessness is sobriety." (174)

"I bring freedom." (196)

"Impeccability ... is not morality. It only resembles morality. Impeccability is simply the best use of our energy level." (248)

"Man has a dark side, yes, and it's called stupidity." (284)

"Be impeccable and you'll have the energy to reach the place of silent knowledge." (286)



Topics for Discussion

THE POWER OF SILENCE discusses six abstract cores of knowledge. The first abstract core is "The Manifestations of the Spirit." Explain this idea as best you can.

THE POWER OF SILENCE discusses six abstract cores of knowledge. The second abstract core is "The Knock of the Spirit." Explain this idea as best you can.

THE POWER OF SILENCE discusses six abstract cores of knowledge. The third abstract core is "The Trickery of the Spirit." Explain this idea as best you can.

THE POWER OF SILENCE discusses six abstract cores of knowledge. The fourth abstract core is "The Descent of the Spirit." Explain this idea as best you can.

THE POWER OF SILENCE discusses six abstract cores of knowledge. The fifth abstract core is "The Requirements of Intent." Explain this idea as best you can.

THE POWER OF SILENCE discusses six abstract cores of knowledge. The sixth abstract core is "Handling Intent." Explain this idea as best you can.

What is intent? What is the spirit? And what is the Eagle? Are these the same idea? Are they related? What is the relationship between these ideas?

Don Juan says that he is more like the nagual Elias than his benefactor the nagual Julian. He tells Carlos that Carlos is more like the nagual Julian than he is. What features do don Juan and Elias share? What features do don Juan and Elias share? How the two pairs distinct from one another?

Do you think nagualism is a plausible world view? If so, why? If not, why not? Does it contain any obvious contradictions? What is its most implausible position? What is its most plausible position?