



Alejandro  
Jodorowsky

# Psychomagic

The Transformative Power of  
Shamanic Psychotherapy

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Alejandro Jodorowsky

Translated by Rachael LeValley



Inner Traditions  
Rochester, Vermont • Toronto, Canada

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“Jodorowsky is a brilliant, wise, gentle, and cunning wizard with tremendous depth of imagination and crystalline insight into the human condition. His work is a source of inspiration for me and for many of the most important and innovative artists of our time. *Psychomagic* is necessary reading for all who long to shock the world into awakening and remembrance of what has always been and what is still to come.”

DANIEL PINCHBECK, AUTHOR OF *2012: THE RETURN OF QUETZALCOATL*

“Currently there are books that have become essential to winnow out established ideas and open new horizons. The texts brought together here have that special ability to contemplate old problems from perspectives that were not thought to exist.”

*EL MUNDO*

“Alejandro Jodorowsky seamlessly and effortlessly weaves together the worlds of art, the confined social structure, and things we can only touch with an open heart and mind.”

ERYKAH BADU, ARTIST/ALCHEMIST

“The best movie director ever!”

MARILYN MANSON

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Having lived many years in Mexico City, I had the opportunity to study the methods of those called “witches” or “folk healers.” They are legion. Every neighborhood has one. Rising up in the heart of the city is the great Sonora market, which sells exclusively magic products: colored candles, dissected fish shaped like the devil, images of saints, medicinal plants, blessed soaps, tarots, charms, plaster sculptures of the Virgin of Guadalupe turned into skeletons, and so on. In some back rooms, plunged in semidarkness, women, each with a triangle painted on her forehead, rub bunches of herbs and holy water on those who come for consultations; they practice “cleansing” the body and the aura . . . Professional doctors, being faithful sons of the university, despise these practices. According to them, medicine is a science. They would like to find a precise, ideal remedy for every illness, with each treatment distinct from all others. They want medicine to be one official method, with no variations, to be applied to patients who are treated only as bodies. None of them proposes to cure the soul. To folk healers, on the other hand, medicine is an art.

It is easier for the unconscious to understand dream language than rational language. From a certain point of view, illnesses are dreams, messages that reveal unresolved problems. “Folk healers” develop personal techniques with great creativity: ceremonies, spells, strange medicines such as café au lait laxatives, rusty screw infusions, mashed potato sanitary napkins, animal excrement tablets, or moth eggs. Some have more imagination or talent than others, but all, if consulted with faith, are useful. They speak to the primitive and superstitious individual, whom we all carry inside.

Watching these popular therapists operate, often performing miracles using the honorable tricks of a skilled magician, I came up with the notion of the “sacred trap.” For the extraordinary to occur, it is necessary for the sick to firmly believe in the possibility of a cure and to accept the existence of miracles. To be successful, the healer is forced to employ tricks during the first meetings, which convince her clients that material reality obeys that of the spirit. Once the sacred trap tricks the person seeking consultation, he experiences an interior transformation that permits him to capture the world by way of the intuition rather than by reason. This is the only way that a true miracle can take place.

But I ask myself: without the sacred trap of this artistic therapy, could a person without faith be cured? On the other hand, although the rational mind guides each individual, can we say that anyone lacks faith? At every moment, the capacity of the unconscious exceeds the limits of our reason, whether by way of dreams or by involuntarily acts. With that in mind, shouldn’t there be a way to make the unconscious behave voluntarily, like an ally?

One incident that occurred in one of my psychogenealogy courses gave me an idea: When I described the causes of neurosis, a medical student suddenly fell on the floor twisting with painful spasms. It seemed like an epileptic seizure. Amid general panic, without anyone knowing how to help him, I went over to the afflicted student and—without knowing why and with a great deal of trouble—I removed his wedding band from the ring finger of his left hand. Immediately, he calmed down. I realized that the objects that surround and accompany us form part of the language of the unconscious. In this way, putting a ring on a person can imprison him, while taking the ring away can relieve him . . .

Another experience, which had very revealing results: When my son Adan was six months old, he was ill with a very bad case of bronchitis. A doctor friend of mine, an herbalist, prescribed drops of essential oils. My ex-wife Valérie, Adan's mother, was to pour thirty drops into his mouth three times a day. She quickly complained that the boy was not getting better.

I told her, "The problem is you don't believe in the remedy. What religion were you brought up in?"

"Like every Mexican—Catholic!"

"Then we are going to incorporate faith into these drops. Each time you administer them, say an Our Father."

So that's how Valérie did it, and Adan recovered quickly.

After that, I began—very prudently—to incorporate this method in my tarot readings. When a client asked me how to solve a problem, I would prescribe what I called "Psychomagic." Why didn't I just call it "magic"?

For a primitive therapy to function, the witch doctor, supported by the spiritual superstitions of the patient, must maintain a mystery, present himself as the possessor of superhuman powers obtained through a secret initiation and relying on divine and supernatural allies to bring about a cure. The remedies they provide are mysterious to their clients, and the actions they recommend are intended to be performed without knowing why. In Psychomagic, to the contrary, we need the individual's understanding instead of his superstitious beliefs. The patient should know the reason for each of his actions. The psychomagician makes the transition from witch doctor to adviser. Using psychomagic prescriptions, the patient becomes his own healer.

This therapy did not come to me as a sudden illumination but was perfected, step-by-step, over the course of many years. In the beginning, it seemed very extravagant, so scarcely "scientific" that I could only experiment with friends and relatives. From time to time, in my conference in Paris, I made references to it. Once, I was invited to the study center founded by the spiritual teacher Arnaud Desjardins. He had learned of my experimentations and asked if I could resolve an illness his mother-in-law suffered: eczema on the palms of her hands. When the lady showed me her affected hands, I thought she made a request-like gesture, as if she felt excluded by her daughter's marriage. I asked that Desjardins and his wife, in front of the patient, spit abundantly over a mound of green clay and then apply the resulting paste over the eczema. The trouble disappeared quickly.

Gilles Farcet, a young disciple of Desjardins, came to see me on the advice of his mentor. Using the pretext of an interview, he wished to familiarize himself with my strange theories. Based on our encounter, I developed a brief "biography" entitled *La Trampa Sagrada* [The Sacred Trickster], which consisted of a large number of readings. Gilles suggested that I develop my ideas more extensively. At the same time, wanting to confirm the effects of my treatments, he requested a psychomagic session to help him become "a profoundly spiritual writer." I suggested that he write a book of interviews with me that would be called *Psychomagic*, subtitled *Sketches of a Panic Therapy*. My young friend was dubious: not knowing the theme at all, he felt incapable of providing me with interesting questions.

That's exactly why I'm suggesting this. The bird of the spirit must liberate itself from the rational cage. So we will reverse the logical order. Instead of you asking me questions and I answering,

first I will respond to you and then you will ask me . . . This is to say, the effect will come before the cause.

And that is exactly what we did: Farcet sat down in front of me with a recorder, and I went along giving responses to nonexistent questions for the next ten hours. There were moments when my young interviewer slept anchored to his machine. Gilles then divided this material into organized sections with questions for headings. Since he was going deep into unknown territory (he had told me, “I don’t know if the artistic path and the therapeutic path can be reconciled”), he wrote in an objective tone declaring: “I am not one of the faithful. I do not write this book as an apprentice but as a friend. At times, a healthy perplexity opposes words, which, by happy effect, forces one to be specific about his thoughts.”

When Marc de Smedt, director of the collection “Free Spaces” at the French publisher Albin Michel, agreed to publish the book, he did so on condition that the title be changed. “No one knows the word ‘psychomagic.’ Better to call it: *Le théâtre de la guérison, une thérapie panique* [The Theater of Healing: A Panic Therapy].”

*El teatro de la sanación* [The Theater of Healing] appeared in 1995. It drew widespread interest. I received a healthy correspondence asking me to prescribe psychomagic acts. To develop this technique, until then practiced exclusively intuitively, I decided to accept two advice seekers per day, from Monday through Friday, in one-and-a-half hour sessions. After establishing their genealogical trees—siblings, parents, aunts and uncles, grandparents, great-grandparents—I advised them on psychomagic acts, which would produce notable results. This was how I developed a certain number of guidelines, which permitted me to teach this art to a large number of students, many of them already established therapists. I granted private sessions for two years, at the end of which I began to write *La Danza de la Realidad* [Reality Dance]. Gilles Farcet fulfilled his career as a spiritual writer, and today, a noble father of a family, he drives back straying spirits, collaborating with Arnaud Desjardins in these arduous tasks.

After the publication by Siruela in Spain of *La Danza de la Realidad* (2001) and thanks to numerous television interviews by Fernando Sánchez Dragó, the greater public learned about Psychomagic. There was no shortage of enthusiasts who, though lacking creative ability, wanted to counsel without ever having performed an honest artistic or therapeutic act and who gave a naive imitation of my techniques.

In 2002, I gave a conference at a university in Madrid for a group of six hundred people. Skillfully directed by my facilitator, the young Javier Esteban, the students presented their problems soliciting psycho-magic advice to resolve them. At the end of the conference, Javier gifted me with a sample of his book, *Duermevela* [Doze], in which he describes his dreams. (“I go to a shop where they sell thousands of gigantic fish tackle items. A fishhook gets me in the knee. The man who accompanies me taught me to fish, but he tells me there’s no need for a rod or any other tackle. I throw everything away, and we go through the woods until we arrive at a river. The fish jump into our hands.”) I consider that his writings have a healing aspect. Javier, in turn, expresses his support of my ideas and requests an appointment, for the purpose of asking me again the questions the students posed, questions to which the actual education system doesn’t respond. “Students have changed, but unfortunately their professors continue to maintain the archaic way of thinking,” he tells me. I travel to Paris, and he interrogates me for several days. “Think without limits; talk for the young mutants.” And that is how the second and third parts of this book were born.



# PART ONE



## Psychomagic

### Sketches of a Panic Therapy

# A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST IN PANIC CHARACTER

by Interviewer Gilles Farcet

*(From Psychomagie. Approches d'une thérapie panique) I am no drunkard, but I am no saint either. A medicine man shouldn't be a saint. He should experience and feel all the ups and downs, the despair and the joy, the magic and the reality, the courage and fear of his people. He should be able to sink as low as a bug or soar like an eagle. You have to be God and the devil, both of them. Being a good medicine man means being right in the midst of the turmoil, not shielding yourself from it. It means experiencing life in all its phases. It means not being afraid of cutting up and playing the fool now and then. That's sacred too.*

JOHN (FIRE) LAME DEER (SIOUX MEDICINE MAN OF THE LAKOTA TRIBE)

After many evenings spent in his library discussing Psychomagie, I asked Alejandro Jodorowsky if he intended to prescribe a psychomagic act for me. He retorted that the mere act of producing this book in his company constituted a sufficiently powerful act. Why not?

To tell the truth, Jodorowsky himself is a walking psychomagic act, an elevated and definitely “panic” character whose vibrational frequency introduces some cracks into the organization of our seemingly predictable universe.

A director who, with his accomplices Arrabal and Topor, has marked the history of theater with his (rightly named) “panic” movement; a maker of cult films like *El Topo* or *The Holy Mountain*, to which unpaid Americans devote theses and scholarly studies; an author and comic-strip writer who can afford the luxury of working with the best cartoonists; an attentive father of five children, with each of whom he actually maintains a prismatic relationship to this day; “Jodo” is also an unconventional tarot reader whose dazzling intuitions have left more than one person speechless; the convulsive clown of the Mystical Cabaret<sup>\*1</sup> who, when the Parisian public was generally boycotting events like this, regularly packed his conferences by word-of-mouth promotional power only; an international magician—one could say interstellar (as influenced by Moebius)—whom rock stars and artists from around the world have consulted.

This Chilean of Russian origin, who lived many years in Mexico and is now rooted in France, is a character that the overly cautious novelists of today could not create, a being who infuses the power of the imagination into all the recesses of his multidimensional existence.

His residence, an erudite alloy of order and disorder, organization and chaos, is the spitting image of its owner, if not simply the image of life itself. It is an experience in itself to surrender to this seedbed strewn with books, videos, toys . . . It is a place where you could run into the cartoonists Moebius, Boucq, or Bess, as well as a cat or a woman from who knows where who appears for a moment to take care of the household . . . It is a place of poetic power, a concentration of excess, yet controlled, energies.

To be more precise, to work with a panic character is not a sinecure. This is because, above all, Jodo superbly ignores schedules, agendas, and other temporal constraints that govern terrestrial life. When we had completed *La Trampa Sagrada* [The Sacred Trickster] and he proposed to help me put

his psychomagic adventure to paper, I understood that I would have to totally dedicate myself and suspend all business. With him there are no advance arrangements, no fixed dates, no well-noted meetings—all is done spontaneously. Everything is on the order of the dazzling. Not that he is incapable of submitting to discipline or to a schedule, quite the contrary; but finally, there is the mystery: how could this man (who, as soon as our interviews were finished, left to direct a film with the evocative title *The Rainbow Thief*, a big-budget shoot) tame sacred monsters like Peter O’Toole, Omar Sharif, or Christopher Lee and impose his sensibility on producers (who are, at the same time, enthusiastic and worried) and accept, in September, a conference for March, without the least effort in the world to jot anything down on any written agenda? It is always necessary, as an intended date approaches, to track him down for fear that he totally forgot and has disappeared to the other side of the world.

Convinced of the convulsive character of reality, Alejandro has that fascinating and exhausting aspect that makes him excessive in all manifestations. When in front of the public, he rarely resists the temptation to go to the limit. Notably very South American, this exceptional being knows how to be, in private, kind and most humble, and he can, in the blink of an eye, transform himself into a baroque opera, in the same vein as his films, where the grotesque competes with the grave, the obscene with the sacred. He is always on the fringe: he dances on the subtle edge separating creation from gratuitous provocation, innovation from savage attacks on good taste, audacity from indecency . . . Familiar with his methods after more than fifteen years of collaboration, Moebius, the genius cartoonist of *El Incal*, sees all this as “the technique employed by Alejandro in order to undermine the resistances of the universe.”

Whatever the case, with Jodorowsky things always end up arranging themselves, regardless of the traumas inflicted on the nerves of the organizers. He has no rival when it comes to spinning a situation presented under the worst auspices into a new direction, and he changes reality as easily as if it were a glove.

Why not mention here a representative anecdote, which will appear again later in the book. It clearly illustrates this capacity to give reality a spin—something you’d better be prepared for if you have the audacity to accompany him on his trajectory.

Motivated by an annual fair, we had agreed to appear together. The fair included an organic vegetable market, vendors of whirlpools, and all sorts of the esoteric: poets of Mother Nature, editors and doctors in alternative medicine . . . Was it a tactical error? What happened was this: When I arrived at Vincennes in search of my hero, I found him immersed in the development of a comic strip and little disposed to detaching himself from his focus to go talk at “the marjoram”<sup>\*2</sup> (as he sweetly called it).

I insisted, however, arguing that they were waiting for us and that we must keep our word, until finally Jodorowsky consented to get into my car, repeating all the while, “I don’t feel it, all this . . . I don’t believe we should go to the Marjolaine . . .”

Upon arriving at our destination, we found the worst: a hall open to the four winds, without microphone or chairs for the panelists, and a crowd of about a hundred people who had come to listen, not to Jodorowsky, because of an error in programming, but to Dr. Woestlandt, the nice author of esoteric-medicine bestsellers . . .

While I was furious, my genius companion, after capturing at a glance the magnitude of the

catastrophe, threw at me, in a fatalistic tone, “You see? I already told you!” and he turned to leave.

My friend ran behind Jodo and advised him to talk anyway. Obviously being sensitive to feminine reasoning, Alejandro turned again and said, “Alright, these people want to hear Dr. Westphaler. Why not introduce me as if I were him? Tell them I am Dr. Wiesen-Wiesen and that I’m going to talk to them.”

Perhaps today I would rise to this challenge, but I was, at the time, still too immersed in the conventional idea according to which Dr. Woestlandt is Dr. Woestlandt, Gilles is Gilles, and Jodorowsky is Jodorowsky . . . My reality principle forbade me from aiding in this masquerade. So I mumbled some polite words to introduce my dangerous friend, who planted himself solidly in front of the disconcerted audience and spoke in a sweet tone, “Listen, I am not Dr. Westphallus, but that doesn’t matter. The person is not important! So, take me for Dr. Wiesen-Wiesen and ask me all your questions. It makes no difference the person. I will respond to you as if I were Dr. Wouf-Wouf . . .”

Dumbfounded at first, the audience did not take long to give in to the spell and enter into Jodorowsky’s game, with which he, before my incredulous eyes, achieved great success. Soon enough he invited his improvised audience to tell him their problems, and in a singsong tone he urged them to take full advantage of the fortune granted by destiny’s whim, “Hark! Ask well your questions. This is the last time I will come to Marjolaine . . .”

After stopping at the Dervy Publishers booth to buy Dr. Woestlandt’s book (“All the same, I must know who this Dr. Westphaller is, no?”), Alejandro returned to the lunchroom where he held court at the center of a vast circle of admirers, continuing with endless kindness to distribute advice and enlightened comments. This was how an afternoon that began as a fiasco ended as an apotheosis.

We should also recall his striking intuition. It is not rare that Alejandro meets a person for the first time and delivers point-blank some hidden truth, thus giving the interlocutor the disturbing impression of being in the presence of an omniscient magician.

A friend—we’ll call Claude Salzmann—has not forgotten the evening after a conference, which was already epic, while sitting on the terrace of a café at Saint-Sulpice, Jodo proceeded, incongruously but not without delicacy, to give one of his small revelations: “Listen to me, Salzmann, can I talk to you? You are a friend of my friend, so I permit myself to talk to you. Listen, Salzmann, if I look at you, I see a man divided into two natures—your upper lip is very different from your lower lip.” Glancing at Claude, I noticed for the first time, this striking facial feature. “Your upper lip, very thin, is that of a serious man, spiritual, almost rigid! It is the lip of an ascetic. But your bottom lip, a lot bigger, fleshy, is the lip of a sensual man, a lover of pleasure. Yes, you have these two natures in you. You must reconcile them.” Albeit in itself very simple, this observation affected my friend, who was applying himself more than ever precisely to unifying in himself these two tendencies: contradictory, according to traditional logic; complementary, according to profound, spiritual logic.

How many people have I heard give similar reports that Jodorowsky had, with the aid of a tarot card or solely with the power of observation, summed up their current difficulty in a word and exposed some arcane secret of their nature to broad daylight?

During a visit one day, I was shocked to witness Jodorowsky, who had never previously met the friend I had brought along, and without her formulating a question or drawing a card, sum up in a few sentences the essentials of the situation in which she found herself. No surprise then that our man inspires such passion and devotion.

The king Jodorowsky sits enthroned in his court, surrounded by swarms of followers for whom the Mystical Cabaret is like a very holy mass. There are those who for years have not missed a service, gathering with devotion to follow the master's most unusual sermons . . .

I would like to make it clear that I am not part of the flock. To use the terms Jodorowsky uses in the postscript to *La Trampa Sagrada*, the “nearly young man” that I am has more to learn from the “nearly old man,” and it is, above all, as friends that we have conversed. It is with a healthy confusion that I sometimes oppose his stories, and this has the positive result of obliging him to clarify his thoughts.

Because of his dazzle, which always provokes fascination, one can also become doubtful or even irritated; for, as exact as they often are, these right-out-of-the-box intuitions sometimes seem a bit hasty. After seeing him indulge in his lightning treatments in the framework of the Cabaret where, in the space of one evening, he boasts about unraveling old psychological knots as a result of the genealogy tree embellished with the zest of “Psychomagic,” the spectator, sympathetic but having conserved a wisp of critical sense, cannot help but swing between admiration and skepticism, amazement and doubt. Admiration and amazement, at the breathtaking performance of this actor par excellence, his ability to manage and to guide the energy of a hall of five hundred people, and the iron relevance of his observations. Skepticism and doubt, as these evenings are garnished with laughter and emotion while human woes are staged with a mad audacity in which complexes and traumas are exposed to broad daylight then treated by the “master” with a clever combination of keenness, outrageousness, and benevolence . . . ushering in a new genre, that of spiritual-analytical “reality show.” One leaves the hall both seduced and worried, wondering about the real consequences and the long-term effects of this jumble of artistic therapy.

There is something of the old-fashioned tooth puller and snake oil peddler in this visionary of Vincennes who describes himself as a “sacred trickster.” But this facet of “transcendental charlatan,” an integral part of the Jodorowsky character, is in the final analysis at the service of a rare compassionate energy. One can also very well say that Alejandro is a bodhisattva à la South American salsa—a spicy salsa, very spicy . . .

He is not a sacred trickster simply because he claims to be; under the excess and the apparent ease of this unconventional artist is a lot of rigor (a particular rigor, but rigor all the same), an inexhaustible creative potential, a profound poetic vision, and, I believe, a lot of kindness.

Our man has a pure heart. If he is king, Jodo doesn't abuse his absolute power, which some of his subjects have granted him. His Majesty is his own fool, never hesitating to put his teachings on trial and through a good measure of buffoonery. Although he doesn't disregard homage from his disciples, he also has no desire to become an idol. Fundamentally disinterested—as I myself have had numerous occasions to verify—Jodorowsky remains, in my opinion, a lucid being, made of his talents as well as of his limitations.

Having had the chance to be in contact with some true masters, such as the Japanese Ejo Takata who marked him with the red iron of Zazen, he knows not to be a guru in the strict and noble sense of the word but rather to be a kind and disturbing genius with whom anyone can walk a stretch of the way.

“Grow up a little,” Jodorowsky yelled one day to his daughter Eugenie, aged twenty; and she replied: “Why don't you grow down a little!” The fact that Alejandro himself, not without pride,

related this to me—his progeny's fine response—says a lot about his character.

Servant of the truth, although at times with the air of an impostor, a brazen acrobat who asks no more than to be silent and bow down before those who surpass him, Jodorowsky is very much a crazy shaman. If the mystical clown indeed has what it takes to immediately inspire fascination or repulsion—and sometimes both—there is much to be gained by knowing him in all of his interior richness.

Even though he has published several novels and countless comic strips, Jodo waited for retirement age to put down on paper what he holds closest to his heart. Following the thread of our conversations, Alejandro took me on a magical journey with all the art of a Castaneda writing for the theater. It is this journey to which you are now invited. This book is as much an artistic-spiritual autobiography as it is a guide for a new therapy. As an open window to a world in which poetry embodies riots, in which theater transforms into ritual sacrifice, and in which a real witch, armed with a kitchen knife, cures cancers, transplants hearts, and nourishes dreams, it is my hope that this book will remain as the legacy of a far from ordinary individual's journey among us.

GILS FARCET  
PARIS, 1989–1993

# ONE



## THE POETIC ACT

*I suppose the birth of what you call Psychomagic responded to a need . . .*

Exactly. During the time of my life that marks my activity as a tarologist,<sup>\*3</sup> I received at least two people per day to read their cards . . .

*You predicted their future?*

Not at all! I do not believe in the real possibility of predicting the future, insofar as from the moment you see the future, you modify it or you create it. To foretell an event is to provoke it; in social psychology this is called “self-fulfilling prophecies.” I have here a text by Anne Ancelin Schutzberger, professor at the University of Nice, which evokes precisely this phenomenon:

If one carefully observes the pasts of a certain number of terminally ill cancer patients, one will notice that many times it has to do with people in infancy predicting something about themselves, which developed into an unconscious “life script” (of themselves or of their families) related to their life and death, at times including the date and time, their age, the very moment that they actually find themselves in the position of dying. For example, at thirty-three years (Jesus Christ’s age at death) or at forty-five (the age of the person’s mother or father at the time of their deaths) or when his son turned seven years old (because this person was orphaned at seven) . . . These are examples of a kind of *automatic realization* of personal or family *predictions*.

In the same way, according to [Robert] Rosenthal, if a professor predicts (in his own head) that a poor student’s performance will remain so, it is certain that it will not change. By contrast, when the professor considers that the student is intelligent but timid and predicts (again, only in his own head) that the student will make progress, the student begins to progress. It is a surprising discovery but verified often and sufficiently enough to inspire a serious distrust of those who, under the pretext of possessing supernatural gifts, take the liberty of predicting events that their client’s unconscious will translate into personal desires with the purpose of obeying the soothsayer’s orders. As a result, the client assumes the work of realizing these predictions, many times with fatal consequences. All predictions are a seizing of power whereby the soothsayer takes pleasure in writing destinies, thus high-jacking the normal course of a life.

*But why does this phenomenon have to have necessarily harmful consequences? What do you think then about those soothsayers who predict happy things, prosperity, fertility, and other wholesomeness?*

In any case, there is a seizure of power, a manipulation. Moreover, I am firmly convinced that under the label of “professional fortune-teller” hide, with rare exceptions, unstable, dishonest, harebrained individuals. At heart, only the predictions of a genuine saint would be deserving of trust. This explains, for example, why I refuse to dedicate myself to clairvoyance.

***Let’s go back to the origins of Psychomagic and your activity as a tarot reader. What was your practice?***

I considered the tarot as a projective test to facilitate locating a person’s needs and knowing where his or her problems reside. It is well known that the mere recognition of an unconscious or poorly understood problem already holds a key to the solution. Working with me, people become aware of their identity, of their difficulties, of what causes them to act. I make them walk through their genealogy tree to show them the ancient origin of some of their discomfort. Nevertheless, I realized immediately that no true healing could take place if one did not take some concrete action. For the consultation to have a therapeutic effect, a creative action accomplished in reality would have to come out of it. To manage this, I had to suggest to those who came to see me one or two specific acts to carry out. The person and I had to, by common consent and with full awareness, figure out a very precise program of action. This is how I came to practice Psychomagic.

***You practiced this therapy for a decade and achieved quite convincing results. How did you invent it?***

Something like this is not invented; one sees the birth through oneself. But this birth has deep roots.

***Before going into detail about Psychomagic, to examine its relationship with psychoanalysis, to mention precise acts, to look into the letters written to you by your clients, it would be interesting to return to those roots.***

The first thing that came to help me was poetry, my contact with the poets.

***At the occasion of our interviews for La Trampa Sagrada [The Sacred Trickster], you told me you saw a lot of the grand poets of your native country, Chile.***

Yes, it was during my youth, in the 1950s. As it happens, I had the luck to be born in Chile. After all, I could just as easily have been born elsewhere. If it had not been for the Russo-Japanese war, my grandparents would not have emigrated and I would have surely been born in Russia. The flip side of this is: “Why did the ship on which they embarked bring them to Chile?” I would like to believe that we choose in advance our destiny and that none of what happens to us is the fruit of coincidence. Yet, if there is no coincidence, everything makes sense. For me, it is my introduction to poetry that justifies my birth in Chile.

***All the same, Chile has never had sole rights to poetry.***

No, poets are everywhere. But the poetic life is a more rare property. In how many countries does a

real poetic atmosphere exist? Without a doubt, ancient China was a land of poetry. But I think, in the 1950s in Chile, we lived poetically like in no other country in the world.

### *Can you explain?*

Poetry permeated everything: teaching, politics, cultural life . . . The country itself lived immersed in poetry. This was due to the temperament of the Chileans and in particular the influence of five of our poets, who were transformed for me into a species of archetypes. These poets were the ones who molded my existence from the beginning. The most well known of them was no less than Pablo Neruda, a politically active man, exuberant, very prolific in his writing and who, above all, lived like an authentic poet.

### *What does it mean to live like an authentic poet?*

In the first place not to fear, to dare to give, to have the audacity to live with true excess. Neruda constructed a house in the form of a castle, gathering together around it a whole village; he was a senator, and he nearly managed to become president of the republic. He handed his life over to the Communist Party, for idealism, because he truly wanted to achieve a social revolution, to build a more just world. And his poetry touched all of the Chilean youth. In Chile, even drunks on a full-blown alcoholic binge recited Neruda's verse! His poetry was recited as much in school as on the street. The whole world wanted to be a poet, like him. I'm not only talking about students, but workers and even drunks spoke in verse! He knew how to capture in his texts all the crazy atmosphere of the country.

Listen to this poem that comes to mind. We would recite it in unison when, in university-student fashion, we intoxicated ourselves with the patriotic wine of our Chilean land:

*It so happens that I am sick of my feet and my nails  
and my hair and my shadow.*

*It so happens I am sick of being a man.*

*Still it would be marvelous*

*to terrify a law clerk with a cut lily,*

*or kill a nun with a blow on the ear.*

*It would be great*

*to go through the streets with a green knife*

*letting out yells until I died of the cold.*

[TRANSLATED BY ROBERT BLY]

Apart from Neruda, who enjoyed worldwide fame, another four poets were of seminal importance. Vicente Huidobro came from well-to-do surroundings, in any case less humble origins than Neruda. His mother knew all the French literary salons, and he received a very thorough artistic education, through which his poetry, of great formal beauty, saturated the entire country with its elegance. We all dreamed about Europe, about the culture . . . Huidobro gave us a great aesthetic lesson. As an

example, I will read to you this fragment of a lecture given by him in Madrid, three years before the appearance of the surrealist manifesto:

Apart from the grammatical meaning of language, there is another magical meaning, which is the only one that interests us . . . The poet creates, outside of the world which exists, a world which should exist . . . The value of the language of poetry comes directly from its separation from spoken language . . . Language converts itself in a ceremony of conjuring and presents itself in the luminosity of its initial nakedness, unconnected from all prefigured conventional dress. Poetry, the ultimate horizon, is, at the same time, the edge where the extremes rejoin, where there is neither contradiction nor doubt. Reaching this last border, the usual sequence of the phenomena breaks its logic, and on the other hand, there where the land of the poet begins, the chain is soldered together in a new logic. The poet takes you by the hand to drive you closer to that last frontier, above the point on the great pyramid, toward that field which extends beyond what is true and false, beyond life and death, beyond space and time, beyond reason and fantasy, beyond spirit and matter . . . There is, in his throat, an unquenchable inferno.

Then there was a woman, Gabriela Mistral. Her appearance was that of a dry, austere lady, very separated from sensual poetry. She taught in the low-income school districts, and this little governess succeeded in becoming a symbol of peace for us. She pointed out the moral requirement with respect to the pain of the world. Gabriela Mistral was for Chileans a kind of guru, very mystical, a universal mother figure. She spoke of God but testified to such rigor . . . Listen to these fragments of the “Oration of the Teacher” (the teacher in question was, naturally, the governess):

Sir! You who taught, forgive that I teach; that I bear the name of teacher as You did here on Earth  
. . .

Teacher, make my fervor everlasting and disillusionment temporary.

Tear from me this impure desire for laws which disturbs me still, this stingy insinuation of protest

that overtakes me when they hurt me . . .

Make me enemy of all power that is not pure, of all pressure that isn't your ardent will over my life . . .

Give me simplicity and give me depth; release me from being a complicated person or banal in my everyday lessons . . .

Lighten my hand in punishment and soften it more for caresses.

The fourth major Chilean poet is Pablo de Rokha. He also was an exuberant being, a kind of boxer of poetry about whom the craziest rumors circulated. They attribute to him two anarchist attacks, frauds . . . He was actually a Dadaist expressionist who imported cultural provocation into Chile. He was rowdy and unruly and could be terribly insulting, and he had a terrible, dark aura in literary circles. These loose phrases that emerge like echoing salvos should suffice to give you an idea of his furious ardor:

*Incinerate the poem, decapitate the poem . . .*

*Choose whatever material, as the stars are chosen from worms . . .*

*When God was still blue inside man . . .*

*You, you are precisely in the center of God, like sex, precisely in the center . . .*

*God's furious corpse howls from my bowels . . .*

*I am going to beat Eternity with the butt of my pistol.*

Finally, the fifth was Nicanor Parra. A native of the pueblo, he climbed the university echelons to become a professor at a large school and to embody the intellectual figure, the intelligent poet figure. He introduced us to [Ludwig] Wittgenstein, the Vienna Circle, Kafka's private diary. He had a very South American sex life . . .

***That is to say . . .***

South Americans are crazy about blonds. From time to time Parra went to Sweden and returned with a Swede. It fascinated us to see him with a stunning blond . . . Then they would divorce, and he would go back to Sweden and return with a new creature. Apart from his intellectual influence, he brought humor to Chilean poetry; he was the first to introduce a comedic element. In creating antipoetry, he reduced the art form. Here I have a fragment of Parra's "Warning to the Reader":

*My poetry may very well lead nowhere:*

*"The laughter in this book is canned!" my detractors will argue,*

*"Just crocodile tears!"*

*"These pages bring yawns instead of sighs"*

*"He kicks and screams like a baby crying for the breast"*

*"The author sneezes to make himself understood"*

*All right: I invite you to burn your ships,*

*Like the Phoenicians, I'm trying to develop my own alphabet.*

*"Why bother the public then?" the reader friends will ask:*

*"Then why give the public such a hard time?" my friendly readers will ask:*

*"If the author himself begins by putting down his own work,*

*How good can it be, after all?"*

*Watch out, I don't put anything down*

*Or better yet, I'll praise my way of seeing things,*

*I'm proud of my shortcomings*

*I'll praise my creations to the skies.*

*Aristophanes' birds*

*Buried the corpses of their parents*

*In their own heads.*

*(Each bird was actually a flying cemetery)*

*The way I see it*

*The time has come to bring this ritual up-to-date*

*So I' ll bury my quills in the heads of my readers!*

[TRANSLATED BY DAVID UNGER]

***I understand then that these five characters greatly marked the young man you were.***

They were alive. Alive and fighters! They were the best enemies in the world; they spent their days fighting, exchanging insults . . . Pablo de Rokha, for example, published an open letter to Vicente Huidobro in which he exclaimed: “I am beginning to be annoyed with this story, my little Vicentito. Apart from that, I am not one of those cowards who beats up a clucking chicken because she says she has laid an egg in Europe.” Do you know what he said about Neruda? “Pablo Neruda is not a Communist, he is a Nerudaist—the last of the Nerudaists, or probably the only one.” These people exposed themselves; they were not afraid to live their passions. As for us, we embraced one cause and then the other . . . We were immersed in poetry from morning to night. It was truly in the center of our existence. For us, these five poets formed an alchemist mandala: Neruda was water, Parra air, de Rokha fire, Mistral earth, and Huidobro, in the center, quintessence. We wanted to go beyond our predecessors who had done no more than anticipate our quest.

***And this, how was it?***

All of these poets had a public role. Huidobro said, “Poets, why sing about the rose? Make it bloom in the poem”; Neruda seduced a woman from the pueblo promising a marvelous gift and then showing her a lemon the size of a pumpkin. They had begun leaving literature to participate in acts of everyday life, taking the aesthetic and rebellious positions typical of poets.

***You and your friends then wanted to go further in this direction.***

I was lucky to be the same age as the famous poet Enrique Lihn, now deceased. One day, he and I and other friends found in a book about Italian Futurism an illuminating phrase by Marinetti: “Poetry is an act.” And from that moment on, we decided to pay attention to the poetic act. For three or four years, we dedicated ourselves to carrying out poetic acts, thinking about them all day long.

***What did these acts consist of?***

For example, Lihn and I decided one day to walk in a straight line, without ever wavering. We walked down the avenue, and we came to a tree. Instead of going around it, we climbed up and over it; if a car crossed in our path, we climbed on top, walking on its roof. In front of a house, we rang the doorbell, entered through the door and exited where we could, sometimes through a window. The important thing was to maintain the straight line and not pay any attention to an obstacle, as if it did not exist.

***This should have caused more than one problem . . .***

Not at all, why? You forget that Chile was a poetic country. Remember, having rung the bell of a house and having explained to the lady of the house that we were poets in action and that our mission required us to cross her house in a straight line—she understood perfectly and had us leave through the back door. For us, this crossing of the city in a straight line was a grand experience, the way we managed to avoid all the obstacles. Little by little, we went about inventing more extreme acts. I was studying psychology. One day I was really fed up and decided to find a way to physically express that I had a bellyful. I left class and went calmly to urinate in front of the door of the office of the rector. Of course, I ran the risk of being permanently expelled from the university. A magical thing: no one saw me. I carried out my act and left incredibly relieved—in all senses of the word. Another day, we put a large quantity of coins in a bag full of holes and traveled to the center of the city. It was extraordinary to see everyone crouching down behind us, the streets filled with doubled-over bodies! We also decided to create our own imaginary city within the real city. For this we needed to celebrate inaugurations. We headed for the foot of a statue, a famous monument, and we began an inauguration ceremony, in accordance with our fantasy. We transformed the National Library into an intellectual café. Without a doubt, this became the seed of the Mystical Cabaret. What we call things is important; by giving things different names, it seemed to us that we transformed them.

Also, we dedicated ourselves to very innocent acts that were no less powerful, like putting a beautiful shell in the hand of the conductor when he came to take our bus tickets. The man stood there stupefied for a long time without saying anything.

***You were scarcely twenty years old. What did your family think of these eccentricities?***

As you know, I come from a family of immigrants who spent eight hours a day working in a store. When poetry entered my life in this form, they were aghast. One day my friends and I took a mannequin and dressed it with my mother's clothes. Then we laid it out like a corpse, surrounded by candelabras, and we held a wake in the living room. Since we were involved in theater, we had all the necessary props, and it made an eerie impression. When my mother arrived, she saw herself being veiled! All my friends came to give their condolences. It naturally had an enormous impact on my family. Another time, we filled my parents' bed with worms.

***But this is very cruel, you were a hateful son.***

I loved them, but I wanted, with all the insanity of youth, to break out of the confines. These acts shook them up, forced them to open. What else could they do before the unforeseen? Life is like that, you understand? Totally unpredictable. You think things will happen this way or that way and, in reality, while standing on the corner talking to a friend, you can be run over by a truck; you can run into an old lover and go to a hotel to make love; or the roof can fall on your head while you work. The telephone can ring to announce the best or the worst of news. Our acts as young poets were performed to prove this, to swim against my parents' rigid world. To get into bed and find yourself with a swarm of worms powerfully symbolizes what happens to all of us, every day.

My father practiced Psychomagic without knowing it: He was convinced that the more merchandise he had, the more he would sell. He had to give shoppers the image of superabundance. Once he had behind him a row of drawers supposedly full of socks. He would stick a sock out of one of the

drawers so it looked like the drawer was jam-packed, when there really was absolutely nothing inside. One day, when the store was full of customers, one of my friends, drunk, started opening all of the drawers. Then he wrote a poem proclaiming that my father was an exceptional man, comparable to the great mystics—equal to those who sold pure emptiness!

***Your father must have been furious.***

Actually, no. Every time something like that occurred, my family suffered a huge impact followed by silence and colossal perplexity. They were completely overwhelmed, and the results were so extraordinary for them that they thought they were living a dream, outside of the usual limitations of their existence. All of these acts had a dreamlike quality, imbued with madness. Remember Lihn and I set strange objectives. When we were fed up with the university, we would take the train to Valparaíso, determined not to return until an older lady had invited us to drink a cup of tea. Successful, we returned to the capital victorious.

One day, with a friend of a friend, we went to a fine restaurant. We were both dressed very elegantly and ordered steak au poivre. Once served, we rubbed the meat all over our bodies, staining our clothing. When we had finished, we again ordered the same and repeated the act. We did it five or six times back to back until the whole restaurant was seized by panic. A year later, we returned to the same establishment, but the maître d' proclaimed: "If you are thinking to repeat what you did the other day, no way! I will not permit you to enter this restaurant." The act had made such an impact that time found itself stopped. It had happened a year earlier, but for him it was as if it had happened a week ago.

***Your words remind me of an episode when I was fifteen or sixteen years old. I was absorbed in Dostoevsky and the impassioned Russians who passed from despondency to exaltation in an instant, inflamed with a cause, knocked to the ground; they fascinated me. One day I asked my friends: Why continue progressing? What would happen if the whole world decided to stop moving? Where would we go? And we decided to throw ourselves on the ground in the middle of the street and not move. The pedestrians walked over us; some made comments. If I'm not mistaken, this was a poetic act.***

Of course! And I am sure that our readers, if they think about it, will remember similar moments of questioning consensus reality. We also lay down in front of a park bench, filthy and dressed in tatters, to remind people that an economic crisis is always possible, that misery can emerge at any moment. But remember, all of this happened in Chile, in a country subject to a form of collective insanity. Surely we could not have gone so far in another environment. The majority of the Chilean bureaucrats lived politely until six o'clock in the evening. Once out of the office, they got drunk and changed their personalities, almost changing their physical bodies. They abandoned their bureaucratic and social identities to assume their magical identities. The party was everywhere—the entire country was surrealist without knowing it.

***Could only the Chilean temperament itself explain this atmosphere?***

People who are thought to be reasonable, those who believe in the reality and the soundness of this world, do not plan crazy acts. But in Chile the earth trembles every six days! The country's floor

itself was, literally, convulsive. This meant that everyone always was subject to a tremor—either physical and existential. We do not inhabit a robust world ruled by a bourgeois order supposedly well ingrained, but we live in a trembling reality. Nothing remains fixed, everything trembles. (*Laughter.*) Everyone lived precariously, as much in the material plane as in the relational. No one ever knew how to end a party: the couple married at six o'clock in the afternoon could dissolve at six o'clock in the morning, the guests could throw the furniture out the window . . . Naturally, anguish was at the heart of all this craziness. The country was poor, the social classes very differentiated.

***Forty years have passed. In retrospect, how do you see these acts? Beyond being picturesque, what did they teach you?***

Boldness, humor, an aptitude for questioning the postulated mediocrity of ordinary life, and a love for the free act. And what is the definition of the poetic act? It should be beautiful, aesthetic, and without any justification. It can also lead to some violence. The poetic act is a call to reality: One must face one's own death, the unforeseen, our own shadow, the worms that swarm inside of us. This life that we want to be logical is really crazy, shocking, marvelous, and cruel. We claim our behavior is logical and consistent, but it is, in fact, irrational, crazy, contradictory. If we lucidly observe our reality, we would affirm that it is poetic, illogical, exuberant. In those times I was, without a doubt, immature, a young, harebrained, insolent kid; this does not deny that that particular period taught me to perceive the crazy creativity of existence and to not identify with the limits the majority of people enclose themselves in until they cannot bear it anymore and burst.

***Poetry does not respect a preordained stereotype of the world.***

No, poetry is convulsive! It's bound up in the earth's tremors! It denounces appearances; it pierces lies and conventions with its sword. I remember one day we went to the medical school and, with the help of a friend, stole an arm from a cadaver. We hid it in a coat sleeve and amused ourselves by shaking hands with people, touching them with the dead hand. No one dared remark that it was cold, without life, because they didn't want to face the crude reality of this dead member. By telling you now, I realize that I am almost confessing. I know that all of this seems far-fetched. For us, it was certainly a game, but a profoundly dramatic game. The act created another reality in the same sense as ordinary reality. The act allowed us to access another level, and I am still convinced that with new acts we can open the door to another dimension.

***So the act conceived in this manner does not have a purifying and therapeutic value?***

Of course it does. If one thinks so. Our individual histories consist of words and acts. Most of the time people are content with small innocuous acts, until one day—"crack"—they lose control, they get furious, they break everything, hurl insults, they succumb to violence, sometimes committing a crime . . . If a potential criminal were familiar with the poetic act, he could sublimate his homicidal expression by staging an equivalent act.

***All the same, there is still an outrageousness, which is, without a doubt, dangerous.***

That's right. Society has put up barriers so that fear and its expression, violence, do not spring up at

every moment. Which is why when one carries out an act different from ordinary and codified actions, it is important to perform it conscientiously, measuring and accepting the consequences beforehand. Carrying out an act is a conscious process that aims at voluntarily introducing a fissure into the dead order that permeates society; it is not the compulsive demonstration of a blind rebel. One should agree to not identify oneself with the poetic act, to not be driven by the energies that it releases. For example, Breton fell into a trap when he, taken by his enthusiasm, declared the poetic act could entail going out on the street armed with a revolver to open fire on people. He really regretted that later, even though he didn't actually do it. His declaration in itself was an attack on society. The poetic act allows for expressing energies that are normally repressed or asleep inside us. The unconscious act is an open door to vandalism, to violence. When the crowds erupt into violence, when the demonstration deteriorates and the people begin to set cars on fire or throw rocks, it is also about a liberation of repressed energies. For this reason, acts of violence do not merit the title poetic act.

***Were you and your friends conscious of this?***

We ended up being so, after observing some dangerous acts perpetrated by hot-tempered individuals. These experiences shook us up and made us question ourselves seriously. A Japanese haiku provided a key for us. A student brought the master his poem, which stated:

*A butterfly:  
take away the wings  
and it turns into a pepper!*

The master's response was immediate: "No, no; it is not like that. Let me correct your poem":

*A pepper:  
add wings  
and it turns into a butterfly!*

The lesson here is clear: the poetic act must always be positive; it must be constructive and not destructive.

***However, many times it is necessary to destroy to be able to build later.***

Yes, but be careful with destruction as an end in itself! The act is an action and not an uncouth reaction.

***In this regard, how do you categorize some of the "acts" you have mentioned?***

Indeed, many of them were nothing but reactions or, let's say, more or less clumsy attempts in the

direction of a dignified act worthy of the title: so much so that I gave myself over to self-examination. I saw very clearly that instead of emptying all of my father's drawers, we could have arrived in procession loaded up with socks and let him fill his boxes so that his dream would become reality. Instead of putting worms in my parents' bed, we should have upholstered it with chocolate currency wrapped in gold paper. Instead of simulating my mother's wake, we could have depicted a scene in which she would have been admired in all her glory, like the Virgin ascending. The shock caused by the act must be positive.

***Through all of this, did you and your friends feel guilty? Did you experience any remorse?***

No, and I continue to say guilt is useless. A mistake is permitted if it is committed only once and as part of a sincere search for knowledge. This is the human condition: man seeks knowledge. And what is a man in search of something if not, by definition, an erratic being? Error is an integral part of the journey. We abandon the negative experience, but without any remorse. We have opened the door to the true poetic act. To make the tortilla, you have to break the eggs.



## THE THEATRICAL ACT

*We have discussed the metaphysical dimension of the act, but let's go back to its artistic aspect. If, before all else, poetry is action, what place should writing occupy? Did you and your friends write or were you content to only execute acts?*

Lihn continued to write and became one of the country's greatest poets, so much so that today no one remembers his acts. Chileans would be surprised to know what kinds of games their national poet devoted himself to. As for me, I abandoned poetry as such to dedicate myself to theater.

*How did this transition take place?*

Love for the act required creating props. Among other things marionettes, with which I quickly fell in love. Straightaway, I saw in the marionette a highly metaphysical form. I loved to see an object fabricated by my own hands escape from me. From the moment I put my hands on the marionette to animate it, the character began to live in an almost autonomous way. I witnessed the development of an unknown personality, as if the doll made use of my voice and my hands to take on an identity that was entirely his own. It seemed that I became a servant more than a creator.

Finally, I had the feeling of being directed by—manipulated by—the doll! This very deep relationship with the marionettes gave birth to a desire to become a marionette myself, in other words a stage actor.

*You really think an actor is like a marionette? That's debatable.*

In any case, this was what I thought of theater and acting. I never liked psychological theater, dedicated to imitating "reality." For me, this realistic theater was a vulgar expression in which, under the pretext of restoring something real, the most obvious aspects are re-created as well as the most hollow and the crudest, just as it is perceived normally. What is generally called "reality" is just a part, an aspect of a much greater order. This so-called realistic theater appeared to me—and it still does—to wash its hands of the unconscious dimension, the dreamlike magic of reality. Because, I repeat, reality is not rational, no matter how much we want to believe that it is to reassure ourselves. Human behavior is in general motivated by unconscious forces, those to which we can attribute rational explanations later. The world itself is not a rigid place but an amalgam of mysterious influences. To retain from reality no more than the immediate appearance is a betrayal, a surrender to illusion disguised as "realism." Hating, as I hated the realistic theater, I began to feel repulsion toward the notion of author. I did not want to watch actors rehearse a previously written text; I would prefer to attend a theatrical performance that had nothing to do with literature. I asked myself: "Why call something a play that's based on a text? Everything can be acted by direction. I could stage the

daily newspaper, raise a marvelous drama from the front page of the newspaper.” That’s how I began to work and to experience an expanding freedom. Since I did not try to imitate reality, I could move as I fancied, make the most extravagant gestures, howl . . . Very quickly, the stage itself appeared to me as a limitation. I wanted to remove the theater from theater. For example, I imagined a piece staged on a bus. The public waited at the stops and got on the bus, which traveled through the city. Suddenly, one had to disembark and enter a bar, the maternity ward, a slaughterhouse; in essence, to get in there where something was happening before setting off again. The events that I enacted were taken up again later by others. When it was announced that my piece would take place in a theater, sometimes I would take the audience to the cellar, to the rest rooms, or to the rooftops. Later, the idea occurred to me that the theater could do without spectators and should not involve more than actors. So I organized big parties at which everyone could perform. Finally, interpreting a character seemed useless to me. The actor, so I believed, should try to interpret his own mystery, to externalize what he carries inside. One does not go to the theater to escape from himself, but to reestablish contact with the mystery that we all are. Theater interested me less as a distraction than as an instrument for self-knowledge. For this reason, I replaced the classical “performance” with what I called “the ephemeral panic.”

### ***What is “ephemeral panic” exactly?***

At this point in our discussion, I should refer to a passage published in 1973 in a book conceived by [Fernando] Arrabal titled *Le Panique*. This book allowed me to formulate the essential concepts of my process and my theatrical conceptions: “To attain panic euphoria, one must liberate oneself from the theater structure—this is a necessary precondition.” From the architectural point of view, whichever form they have, theaters are designed for actors and spectators; they obey the primordial law of the game, which amounts to delimiting a space, that is to say, isolating the stage from reality, and that is why they impose (such imposition being anti-panic) an understanding a priori of the relationship of the actors and the space. Before everything else, the actor must serve the architect and then the author. Theaters impose corporeal movements, even though, in general, it is a human gesture that determines the architecture. By eliminating the spectator from the panic party, one automatically eliminates the “seat” and the “interpretation” from the unmoving stare. The place where the “ephemeral” takes place is a non-delimited space in which one does not know where the stage ends and where reality begins. The “panic company” will choose the most attractive place: a useless terrain, a forest, a public place, an operating room, a pool, a dilapidated house, or even a traditional theater, but using all of its spaces: euphoric demonstrations between the seats, in the dressing room or the restrooms, going beyond the long corridors, in the cellar, the foyer, the roof, and so on. One can also make an “ephemeral” act in the ocean, in an airplane, in a very fast train, in a cemetery, in a maternity ward, a slaughterhouse, a nursing home, a prehistoric cave, a gay bar, a convent, or at a funeral. Since the “ephemeral” is a concrete manifestation, it cannot call up problems of space and time. The space has its real measurements and cannot symbolize another space; it is what it is in that moment. This is also true for time: there can be no depiction of aging. The time that passes is truly the time during which the actions last. In this real time and this objective space the ex-actor moves. An actor divides his activity between a “person” and a “character.” Before panic, one could describe, in a clear and precise manner, two theater schools. In the first, the person-actor subsumes himself totally in the “personality,” lying to himself and to others with such precision that he ends up losing his “person” to turn into an *other*, a character with more concise restrictions and more precise definition.

In the second school, one learns to act in an eclectic manner, in a way that the actor in being the *person* was simultaneously the *character*. The actor should never forget being in the process of *acting*, and the *person*, during the *performance*, could criticize his *character*.

The ex-actor, panic man, does not *act a performance* and has totally eliminated the *character*. In the “ephemeral,” this panic man tries to bring to the *person* what he is trying to be.

Playwrights love to force a performance. It often happens that atop one stage another stage is staged where other actors perform before the first actors. Panic man thinks that in everyday life the “majestic” go around disguised, interpreting characters, and that the mission of the theater is to quit interpreting characters facing other characters, to eliminate that in order to ultimately get closer, little by little, to the person.

It is the inverse path of the old theater schools: Instead of going from the person to the character—as the old schools believed—panic man tries to begin with the character, which is (according to the anti-panic education implanted by the “majestic”) the person he carries inside himself. This “other” who wakes up in a panic euphoria is not a puppet made by definitions and lies but a being with fewer restrictions. The euphoria of the “ephemeral” drives the totality, to the liberation of superior forces, to a state of grace.

To conclude: Panic man does not hide behind “characters” but tries to find his mode of real expression. Instead of being a lying exhibitionist, he is a poet in a trance state. (We understand by poet, not the office writer but the athlete creator.)

### ***How did you put this program-manifesto together?***

I promoted among the spectator-actors the practice of a radical theater act, which consisted of interpreting one’s own drama, exploring one’s own intimate enigma. It was for me the beginning of the sacred theater and was almost therapeutic. Then I came to realize that if I had, in my theatrical expression, shattered form, space, the relationship between actor and spectator, I had not yet attacked time. I was still a prisoner of the idea that the show must be repeated, performed many times. At the time when “happenings” were taking place in the United States, on my part in Mexico, I had invented what I called the “ephemeral panic,” which consisted in staging a show that could be presented only once. It had to be accomplished by introducing perishable things: smoke, fruits, jelly, live animals . . . It had to do with accomplishing acts that could not ever be repeated. In summary, I wanted the theater, instead of tending toward the fixed, toward death, to return to its uniqueness: the instantaneous, the fugitive, the only moment forever. This way, theater is made in the image of life where, according to a saying by Heraclitus [of Ephesus], one never bathes in the same river. Thus, to conceive the theater was to carry it to the extreme, to go to the paroxysm of this art form. Through the happenings, I rediscovered the theatrical act and its therapeutic potential.

### ***How did you pull it off? What were the ingredients for the happening?***

Well, I would rather choose an ordinary place than a theater: the School of Fine Arts, a psychiatric ward, a sanatorium, a school for people with Down’s syndrome . . . I chose existing places and placed the action there.

***You really wanted to set up the “ephemeral panic” in these places?***

Yes, that’s the marvel of Mexico! Discipline does not exist; they let you do this kind of thing. One day, we performed a large ballet in a cemetery. It was a strong act, the dance of the living among the dead . . . So then, once a place was selected, I made calls to a group of people who wanted to express themselves. In no way did I direct actors. These people came to carry out a free, public act. All the conditions were thus brought together for the coming of the ephemeral.

***The ephemeral, such as what you practiced, had, if I’m not mistaken, something impressive: it had all the ingredients of a sumptuous party. How did you find the means to finance such events?***

I always found the money. For me the ephemeral panic had to be precisely a party. Now, when one throws a party, one does not charge his guests for the drinks or food they consume. I always gave that free. I received money from royalties, from staging more classical pieces, many times under another name. The fact is that, like [Ivanovitch] Gurdjieff, I never had financial problems, which, seeing as it always worked out, is truly a miracle! Apart from that, I believe in miracles, or rather in the existence of a law that if my intentions are pure and I do what I must do, the money will follow, in some way or another. Maybe I will never be what a person calls rich, but I will always arrange the financial means that are required each moment. When I had money in my safes, I would invest it in a happening. I asked acquaintances if they wanted to express something, then I gave them the means to do so. This method of approaching the happening already had a therapeutic value. It was also a way to continue in line with the poetic acts we have talked about.

***What lessons did you extract from your happenings?***

I realized that many people carry an act inside, which ordinary conditions do not let them materialize. When someone is offered the concrete possibility and favorable circumstances to publicly express the act asleep inside him, it is very rare that the person hesitates. If I asked you what act you would like to carry out in public, I am sure that an answer would occur to you immediately, and if I brought together the favorable conditions for actualizing this expression, you would treasure participating in the game.

***Okay . . .***

I’m going to give you some examples. In the 1960s, I founded a panic group in Mexico, not with actors and other artists, but with enthusiastic people in search of an authentic way to express themselves, far from conformity. I had obtained the main playground of San Carlos school. I proposed that my friends envision an act that they would like to carry out, and I would find the means to make it happen. The celebrated painter Manuel Felguérez joined the panic demonstration and decided to execute a chicken publicly and make an abstract painting with the animal’s guts and blood, while his wife, dressed in a nazi uniform, devoured a dozen chicken tacos at his side.

***What a good show . . . Really delicious. Are there more?***

Hundreds! A young woman wanted to dance naked to African rhythms while a bearded man covered her body with shaving cream.

Another wanted to be a classical ballerina, with a tutu but without underwear, and urinate while interpreting *Swan Lake*.

An architectural student used a mannequin and hit it violently with an ax in its stomach and privates. Once the mannequin was destroyed, he took from its insides various casings of sausage and hundreds of crystal balls.

Another student appeared dressed as a math professor with a big bag full of eggs. As he recited his algebraic formulas, he broke one egg after the other on his forehead.

Another arrived with a tin bowl and several liters of milk. With a foot in the bowl, he began to recite a classic Mother's Day poem while he emptied the milk over his head.

A woman with long blond hair, dressed in black stockings decorated with pearls on the ankles and walking with crutches, yelled at the top of her voice: "I'm innocent! I'm innocent!" while she took from between her breasts slices of raw meat and lanced them at the public. Then she sat in a child's chair and a hairdresser completely shaved her head. In front of her was a baby carriage filled with doll heads of all sizes, without eyes or hair. Once shaved, the woman began to throw the heads at the public while screaming, "I am me! I am me!"

A young man wearing a tuxedo jacket pushed a bathtub covered by a towel toward the center of the stage. By its weight, one could guess it was full of liquid. He left the stage and returned carrying in his hands a young woman dressed as a bride. Without putting her down, he removed the towel from the tub. It was full of blood. Without letting go of the woman, he began to stroke her breasts, her crotch, and her legs, becoming more and more excited about submerging her in the blood. Then he started to rub her with a live viper while she sang an opera melody.

An exceedingly attractive woman, with the air of a Hollywood vampiress, wearing a long golden dress that clung to her body, appeared onstage with a pair of large scissors in her hands. Several dark-skinned men crawled toward her, each offering her an enormous banana, which she cut with her scissors roaring with laughter.

***These are sufficient examples. One can see in these baroque descriptions a panoply of images. You speak in the first place of the therapeutic value of these acts. But isn't there a risk of sinking into perversion?***

In Mexico I was prohibited from carrying out in public acts that had openly sexual connotations. Since I did not want to have problems with the law, I exercised some control and excluded people whose acts could have been viewed as attacks on modesty. Likewise, I always tried to keep myself far from drugs. But, to be sure, censorship was only exercised in two cases. One day a lunatic was determined to eat a live dove onstage. His act produced a commotion. Some people fainted, and articles of protest appeared in the newspaper. But they couldn't put me in jail, which would have happened had it been a sex scandal. Outside of sex, everything is permitted.

***You speak of a limit imposed outside the country's law. What would happen if this restriction did not exist?***

In the United States it was common, in the framework of the happenings, to give oneself up to a kind of collective orgy in which the participants stroked themselves while smoking marijuana. I was invited on multiple occasions to this type of celebration in New York or in other places, but I always declined the invitation because I quickly realized that this way was a dead end. All of this finally translated into a kind of shifty pornography. Now, pornography is not constructive but destructive: under the appearance of liberty, what is really presented to us is another form of slavery.

***Let's go back to the story of the pepper and the butterfly. If the act is an action and not a reaction, where is the boundary between the releasing of monsters sleeping deeply inside us, with the consequent risk that they will devour us, and the conscious materialization of a liberating act?***

This has to do with a subtle border, which is precisely where the danger of this type of practice is located. I was soon approached by people to whom pornography and vandalism constituted acts. I did not encourage them, because the experience of poetic acts had taught me to direct only positive things. However, it is very difficult to achieve the "positive," that is to say, something that creates a feeling of life and of expansion; by the "negative" I mean "acts" that, when brought to the stage, create a feeling of death and destruction. The act itself implies connecting with the dark and violent, the unutterable and repressed, that we carry inside ourselves. As positive as it is, all acts carry a certain "negativity."

What is important is that this destructive energy, which, when allowed to stagnate, eats at us from the inside, can release itself as a channeled and transformed expression. The alchemy of the successful act changes the darkness to light.

***Your responsibility is, at the very least, overwhelming! Don't you run the risk of playing the apprentice wizard?***

Not anymore. I am not safe from all risks, because danger is part of life. If one wants to remain surrounded by his little world without questioning his function, it's not worth it to try an act that entails risk! Better to stay at home watching television. But the work that I propose actually is founded on a lot of experience, experience that I did not have in that long-ago time of the happenings. Apart from that, it wasn't my place to be a therapist. I was, first in the quality of an artist, a man of the theater in search of a total expression. As I explored this art form, I saw in it, in addition, therapeutic effects. It is necessary to restore this experience in context. That being said, I admit to having committed some failures during this time. For example, the public devouring of the dove seems to me today an all-around error, a purely destructive act. But I didn't expect it! I did not imagine the man could manifest something like that. He had never stated to me that this was his intention. When I saw him arrive with this live animal, it had a strong impact on me, and I was overwhelmed. I recognize my insanity at that time. But, what can I do? One becomes wise only in measures, as he goes through his own insanity.

***Was there a time when you felt afraid of losing control of an energy you had generated? Were there moments in which the ephemeral panic transformed into panic pure and simple?***

*(Laughter.)* There were extreme instances, but I believe them to have always been mysteriously protected. To see Jerry Lee Lewis burn his piano at the end of his concerts really affected me; this influenced me to set fire to a piano and to generate a panic movement in a theater. On another occasion, in the American center of Paris, during an ephemeral that made history, I had a basket full of vipers, which I planned to throw on the audience. Can you imagine the apocalypse that would have caused? But just as I was going to act, a kind of sixth sense warned me of the danger. I suddenly had the vision of a horrific panic, heart attacks, people trampled or crushed in the stampede for the exit . . . It could have been a real catastrophe . . .

***Can you give me an example of an extreme happening that you value as an initiation?***

At the time, I was very young and quite handsome. So, I had a few admirers. Four of them wanted to stage a strange show. In Mexico, it is customary to drink tequila with a kind of spicy tomato juice called *sangrita*. There are, therefore, always two bottles: one of tequila and one of sangrita. The young ladies came onstage to offer me a bottle of tequila, asking me to drink it. Once I had done it, a doctor came and extracted a bit of blood from each one of them. This blood was spilled in a glass that they presented to me saying: "Now drink the sangrita: drink the blood of your disciples." For me this was a real shock. I went off on a long speech about bread, wine, supper, the Last Supper, all the while telling myself that since I had been so crazy as to organize these happenings, I would now have to face the consequences of my own acts. When I finally decided to drink the blood, it had coagulated! As creator of the ephemeral panic, it was impossible to draw back: I therefore had to not drink but eat the blood of my flock.

Beyond the outrageous or scandalous character of such experiences, they have value as initiation rites. They force you to go, if only for a moment, beyond attraction and repulsion, beyond cultural conditioning, beyond the criteria of beauty and of faith.

These women put me up against a wall, and I had to abandon speech and pure aesthetics. It was a lesson. I admit that these acts were not always conscientiously conducted and that they were part of this experimental period, but you have to get into the cage if you're going to tame the tiger.

***From the artistic point of view, these practices earned you a rather changed reputation.***

The polemic was considerable. I received a lot of letters in which the dithyramb rubbed shoulders with an insult, even a threat. The world of Mexican theater found itself revolutionized. From Mexico, I came to Paris, where this extraordinary Central American happening took place.

***Maybe you can talk to us about that, about the extent to which it was a kind of apotheosis for you, a convulsive act and purifier.***

Yes, it was a grandiose party, a celebration where the forces of darkness emerged from the trap to fight out in the open with the forces of light, a battle between angels and beasts, a ritual saturated with insanity and with wisdom . . . This panic show had been meticulously prepared. I had acquired certain experience, and nothing tempted me. The risks were assumed with full knowledge of the cause. Putting on this event, I was aware of heading toward a death, a rite of passage from which I would come out either destroyed or transformed . . . For me, it was not about amusing myself by

surrendering to a little intellectual masturbation in front of a select public. I didn't care in the least about the avant-garde flights of fancy coming from the deteriorated brains of some self-satisfied pseudo-artists. I did not worry then, any more than I do now, about the little apprehensive "spirituality" milieu, or about the opinions of those perpetually frightened people who see refuge in a cheap junk nirvana in an effort to avoid facing the monstrosities of life, the daily panic dimension . . . It was not a question of staging a nice little show whose audacity would be applauded in trendy reviews, but to question myself completely. I wanted to expose myself: to put life, death, madness, wisdom in a game and to undertake a kind of ritual sacrifice.

### ***What happened?***

The first part was based on creations by Topor, Arrabal, and Alain-Yves Layaouanc. Topor gave me four drawings, which I staged with Graciela Martínez's ballet company, with suits made of white fabric on which the artist himself drew, and figures carved in wood. That way the public could attend Topor's ballet, which took place slowly on a black platform. It portrayed the stages of initiation of a very young girl: her first pair of stockings, brought in a little wheelbarrow by an elderly lady without legs; her first pair of shoes; her first bra (two Chaplinesque characters came throwing kicks on an enormous plaster breast, lifting up a cloud of dust); her first lipstick; her first jewelry . . .

Arrabal entrusted me with a little four-page comedy: the story of a princess in love with a dog-faced prince who ends up by deception with a bull-faced prince. For this scene, I filled the stage with a thousand chicks chirping deafeningly. The princess masturbated a bullhorn until a stream of milk gushed out. To me, these first two parts constituted understanding the comic-poetic prologue of the "Sacramental Melodrama." Some of the more well-known American Beat poets, like Allen Ginsberg and Lawrence Ferlinghetti, attended the event. The latter was so impressed that he asked me for a written description of "Sacramental Melodrama" for his *City Lights Journal*, an article that would be preceded by a little explanatory preface. The simplest is to let you read this document, composed immediately after the event and published in San Francisco in 1966. It conveys all the craziness and the beauty of this ephemeral panic, better than my memory could today.

The goal of theater is to provoke accidents. Theater should be based on what has been called "errors": ephemeral accidents. In accepting its ephemeral character, theater will discover what distinguishes it from other arts and consequently opens it to its own core. Other arts leave written pages, recordings, canvas, volumes: objective traces that time erases very slowly. Theater itself should not last even a day in the life of a man. Just born, it should immediately die. The only traces it will leave will be carved into the interior of human beings and will manifest in psychological changes. If the objective of other arts is to create oeuvres, the goal of theater is specifically to change man. If theater is not a life science, it cannot know how to be an art.

## **SACRAMENTAL MELODRAMA**

**A panic ephemeral presented May 24, 1965, at the Second Festival of Free expression in Paris**

A scene from which all the twists, cords, pretenses, and decorations had been removed. In other words, a stage cleaned of all the refuse and triviality: nothing but naked walls.

- Everything is painted white, including the floor.
- A black automobile (in good condition); the windows are broken so it can shelter things, to be used like a dressing room, a place to rest, and so forth.
- Two white boxes on which objects are arranged.
- A butcher's block, a hatchet.
- A pot of oil boiling on an electric hot plate.
- Before the curtain is raised, large quantities of incense are burned.
- All the women are topless.
- Two of them, spread out on the ground, are painted entirely in white.
- Another woman, painted in black, is atop the roof of the black automobile. At her side, another, painted pink. Both have their feet in a basin of money. A woman dressed in a long silvery dress, her hair arranged in a half-moon, leans on two crutches. Her whole face is masked, including her nose and mouth. Two holes in the dress reveal her nipples; another reveals her pubic hair. She carries a large pair of silver scissors.
- One more woman, wearing an executioner's hood, high leather boots, a thick belt. She holds a whip. Her breasts are covered with a black shawl.
- A rock band: six guys with hair to their shoulders.
- No one must have taken drugs, except the musicians.
- A handrail connects the stage to the public. The objects and costumes used during the show will be thrown at the spectators.

Sudden and rowdy opening of the curtain. The calm before the storm. I appear, dressed in a shiny black plastic suit, high trousers like those of a garbage collector, rubber boots, leather gloves, large plastic glasses. On my head, a white motorcycle helmet, like a big egg.

Two geese. I cut their throats. The music explodes: a cascade of electric guitars.

The birds ramble, dying. Feathers fly. Blood squirts on the two women in white. Trance. I dance with them. I beat them with the dying birds. Noise of death. Blood.

(I had anticipated cutting the birds' throats on the butcher's block. But, in my trance, carried away by a strange force, I ripped their necks with my bare hands as easily as if uncorking a bottle.)

The woman in pink, her feet still in the basin, moves her hips, while the woman in black, like a slave, begins to cover her body in honey.

I destroy the geese on the butcher block.

The woman in silver violently opens and closes the scissors. Ah, that metallic sound!

She gives the scissors to the two women in white who begin to cut the black plastic off me.

She destroys my suit. I lose my boots and gloves. Curiously possessed also, the women tear up my suit with their bare hands.

My body is then covered with twenty pounds of steak stitched onto me like a shirt.

Howling, the women hurl the red meat and tear it to shreds piece by piece. They give the pieces to the woman in silver. With an enormous silver knife, she calmly throws the steak into the boiling oil. (The proximity of the hot plate to the sweating bodies of the women produces electric shocks.)

Each piece of meat once fried is put on a white dish; the two women put the dishes in the public's view.

I remain dressed in black leather pants. A phallus made of the same material is hung perpendicular to the floor. I have leather bracelets on my wrists and ankles: homage to Maciste, the Hercules of the Italian peplum (sword and sandal films). Concentration. Karate-kata.

I take the hatchet and cut my leather phallus into slices on the butcher's block.

The woman in black, conscious of the skeleton, dances; she moves the bones like a marionette while I break the white dishes with a hammer in one blow.

The women in white dance without stopping. When they feel tired they take the Zazen posture.

I bring a metal frame. Slowly, I lift the black shawl covering the breasts of the executioner. Her skin is not painted. She has a sound and strong chest, a powerful body.

I put the frame around my neck while turning my back to the public.

The woman gives me a lash of the whip.

I trace a red line on her right breast with lipstick.

Second lash of the whip. The line begins at her solar plexus and descends to her vagina.

(The first lash was strong but not so much: I needed more. I sought a still-unknown psychological state. I needed to bleed to transcend myself, to break my own image. The second lash branded me instantly. Then the executioner lost control, for she had often dreamed of flogging a man. The third time, very excited, she lashed me with all her might. The wound took two weeks to heal.)

The woman wants to continue to beat me; she pushes me with all her strength. With the apparatus around my neck, I whirl around and fall to the ground. (I could have broken my cervical vertebrae but, in the strange emotional state where I found myself, time slowed down, and as if I were in a movie in slow motion, I lifted myself up without the slightest injury.) I pinch her breasts to bring her back to herself. Calm.

The woman in black brings me lemons. Ah, this yellow color!

I lay them down in a circle. I kneel in the middle.

A professional hairdresser, nearly paralyzed with fear, approaches to cut my hair.

The woman covered in honey comes down from the roof of the car. I dance with her.

Sexual desire with dreamlike force. Her tights seem to summarize all of social hypocrisy. I remove them without preamble. They slip down her honey-covered thighs. Bees. Its impact on her black pubic hair. The submission of woman. Her eyes half-closed. Her naturally accepting nudity. Liberty. Purity. She kneels next to me. On her body, starting from the stomach, I glue the hair cut from my head.

I want to give the impression that these pubic hairs grow like a forest and invade the whole body. The hands of the hairdresser are paralyzed by anxiety. It is the executioner who must manage to shave

my head.

Two models of Catherine Harley, strangers to all that has happened and panicked at the idea of soiling their very expensive silk clothing (rented for the occasion) come and go, carrying two hundred fifty baguettes onto the stage.

Now my brain is on fire. I take four black snakes out of a jar of money. At first, I try with tape to stick them onto my head to substitute for hair, but I finish with trying to put them on my chest like two live crosses. Perspiration impedes me.

The snakes move around my hands like living water. Marriage.

I chase the woman in pink with the snakes. She hides in the car, like a turtle in its shell. She dances inside. She makes me think of a fish in an aquarium.

I frighten the model dressed in green. She drops her bread and jumps back.

A spectator laughs. I throw the bread at her face. (During a reception, some days later, this woman approached to tell me that receiving the bread in the face seemed like communion, as if I had presented her with a gigantic sacramental bread upside the head.)

Suddenly, lucidity: I see the public seated there in the chairs, paralyzed people, hysterical, excited, but immobile, nonparticipatory, terrorized by the chaos, which is about to engulf them; I want to throw the snakes on them or to blast them.

I restrain myself. I refuse the easy scandal of a collective panic.

Calm. Violence of the music. Amplifiers turned all the way up. I put on pants, a shirt, and orange shoes. The color of a Buddhist burned alive.

I exit and return with a heavy cross made with two wooden beams. On the cross, a crucified chicken upside-down, with two nails in its claws, like a decapitated Christ. (I had let it rot for a week.) On the cross, two road signs: on the lower part, a sign with an arrow stating "exit on top"; above the chicken, a sign stating "no exit." I give the cross to the silvery woman. I bring another. Two signposts: always the one on the bottom indicates the exit at the top; always the one on top prohibits exiting.

I give the cross to a woman in white. I bring a third cross. I give it to the other woman in white.

The two women straddle the crosses, transforming them into gigantic phalluses; they fight; with one of the two sticks at the end of the cross in the car window, they simulate the movements of a sexual act achieved with the vehicle.

I put the basin in front of the cross. The crucified chicken is shaken off over the spectators' heads. We let the cross fall.

Among the musicians, I choose the one with the longest hair. I lift him. He is as stiff as a mummy. I dress him in priest's clothing. I cover him with stoles.

The women, on their knees, open their mouths and stick out their tongues as far as they will go.

A new character appears: a woman dressed in a tube-shaped suit, like an upright worm. This suggests the idea of a "papal form" in decomposition—a pope becomes a Camembert.

The musician, imitating the gestures of a priest, opens a can of fruit in syrup. He places half of a yellow apricot in each woman's mouth. They swallow it in just one mouthful.

Sacramental bread bathing in syrup!

A pregnant woman makes her entry. Stomach made of cardboard. The pope notices that she has a plaster hand. He takes the hand and breaks it into a thousand pieces. He opens the stomach using a pickax. (I must control it to prevent him from truly wounding her.)

He puts his hands on the interior of her stomach and takes out light bulbs. The woman screams as if she is giving birth. She gets up, tears a baby made of rubber from her breasts and hits the pope in the chest. The doll falls to the ground. The woman leaves. I pick up the baby. I open its stomach with a scalpel and take out a live fish convulsing in anguish. End of the music. Brutal drum solo. The fish continues to wriggle; the drummer shakes champagne bottles until they explode.

Upon seeing the froth covering everything, the pope has an epileptic attack. The fish dies. The drummer is silent. I throw the animal over the handrail; it falls in the middle of the spectators. Presence of death.

Everyone leaves the stage except me.

Jewish music. Dreadful hymn. Slowness.

Two huge white hands hurl a cow's head at me. It weighs eight kilos (seventeen pounds). Its whiteness, its dampness; her eyes, her tongue . . .

My arms feel its coldness. I myself get cold. In an instant, I become this head.

I sense my body: a corpse in the form of a cow's head. I fall to my knees. I want to yell. That is impossible because the cow's mouth is closed. I stick my index finger in her eyes. My fingers slip on the pupils. I don't feel anything but my fingers—sensible satellite turning around a dead planet.

I feel myself like the cow's head: blind. Desire to see.

I pierce the tongue with a hole punch; I open the jaws. I take out the tongue. I direct the head, mouth open, toward the sky, while I myself also look up, mouth ajar.

A howling that does not come from me but from the corpse. One more time, I see the public. Immobile, frozen, made by the skin of a dead cow. All of us are the corpse. I throw the head to the middle of the stage. It becomes the center of our circle.

A rabbi enters (the huge white hands were his).

He wears a black coat, a black hat, a white Father Christmas beard. He walks like Frankenstein. He is standing on a silver basin. He takes three bottles of milk from a leather suitcase. He dumps them into his hat.

I rub my cheek against his. His face is white. We take a milk bath. Baptism.

He grabs hold of my ears and kisses me passionately on the mouth. His hands take hold of my buttocks. The kiss lasts several minutes. We tremble, electrified. Kadish.

With a lead pencil, he traces two lines from the corner of my mouth to my chin. My jaw now looks like a ventriloquist's doll. He is seated on the butcher's block. One of his hands rests on my back as if he wants to pass through, to cut my spinal column, to put his fingers in my rib cage and squeeze my lungs and make me scream or beg. He makes me move. I feel like a machine, a robot. Dread. I must stop being a machine.

I slip my hand between his legs. I open his fly. I put my hands in and with a keen force I take out a

pig's foot (similar to the one that I imagined to be the phallus of my father when I was five years old). With the other hand I take out a pair of bull's testicles. I spread my arms out in the form of a cross. The rabbi screams as if he were castrated. He appears dead.

The Jewish music becomes stronger; each time, it becomes more and more melancholy.

A butcher appears, wearing a hat, a coat, a black beard, his apron covered in blood.

He spreads the rabbi out and begins the autopsy: he puts his hands in his coat and takes out an enormous cow's heart. Odor of meat. I nail the heart down to the cross. Long pieces of gut. I nail it.

The butcher leaves. Terrified, I lift up the rabbi's hat. I take out the cow's brain. I squash it against my head.

I take the cross and put it near the rabbi. I take from the suitcase a long plastic red ribbon and attach the old man to the cross, covered in guts.

I lift up everything—wood, meat, clothing, body—and I throw it all along the length of the ramp that descends to the public. (Everything weighs nearly 125 kilos: in spite of the shocking violence, the man feels nothing and has not a scratch on him.)

The women in white, black, pink, and silver enter.

They kneel.

Waiting.

A new person enters: a woman covered in black satin cut in triangles: a kind of spiderweb. A three-meter rubber dinghy is attached to her suit and resembles an enormous vagina. Orange plastic filled with air. The bottom of the raft is made of white plastic.

Symbol: the hymen.

Dance. She signals to me. When I approach, she dismisses me. When I move away, she follows me. She mounts me. The raft covers me completely. I take the ax. I split the white bottom. Hurling. I split the web and take refuge in the vagina. I stay between her legs, hidden by the black satin. From a bag hidden near her stomach, I take out forty live turtles and throw them at the public.

They seem to gush from the enormous vagina, like live stones, one could say.

I begin to be born. Cries from a woman giving birth. A woman sobs. I fall to the ground in the middle of the glass lightbulbs, bits of plates, feathers, blood, pieces of firecrackers (while he shaved my head, I lighted thirty-six, one for each year of my life), puddles of honey, pieces of apricot, lemons, bread, milk, meat, rags, wood splinters, nails, sweat: I rebirth in that world. My cries resemble those of a baby or an old man. The old rabbi, making a desperate effort, hops from here to there, attached to the cross like a pig in agony. He frees himself from the plastic ribbon. He exits.

The woman-mother pushes the woman in black toward me. I lift her. I bring her to center stage, her arms are spread open. A corpse-cross. The black paint suggests a cremation: my own death.

Giving me life, the woman threw death into my arms. Defiled with the makeup of my partner, I begin to turn completely black. My face looks as if it were burned.

The women attach us, one to the other, with bindings. I am tied to her by the waist, the arms, the legs, and the neck. This bony cadaver is encrusted in me, and I am encrusted in her. We look like Siamese twins: we nearly make one. Slowly, we improvise a dance. We sprawl on the ground. The

movements are not hers or mine, but both of ours at the same time. We can control them.

The women in white and pink splashes us with mint, black currant, and lemon syrup. The gooey liquid, green, red, and yellow, covers us; mixed with the dust, it creates a kind of mud.

Magma.

The curtain begins to fall slowly. Our united bodies cling one to the other, like pillars. We want to rise; we fall.

The curtain is down.

(All the ingredients employed in the “Sacramental Melodrama” were thrown at the public: suits, axes, containers, animals, bread, auto parts, and so forth. Big altercations between those present who fought like birds of prey to salvage the relics. Nothing remained.)

*Ahem, I ask myself if I regret having missed the “Sacramental Melodrama” or if I am glad to have missed it.*

Wait! It’s not over yet! The audience then argued over the live turtles, the internal organs, the steaks, the hair, and so forth. I returned to the stage and addressed them: “Generally, one pays a high price for one’s place at a theater to receive very little. Today, there was no charge, you didn’t pay anything, and you received a lot. It is midnight. In order to present to you the last part of this poem, I need two hours of preparation. Go get some coffee and come back at two in the morning.”

Everyone applauded and left the theater. At two in the morning, the theater was again full. I began the ceremony that Alain-Yves Lyaouanc had proposed to me. I got dressed in a suit from the 1920s; I shaved the pubic hair of his young wife to the sound of sacred music. On her body, she had glued dominoes. It was a very moving act, and the spirit in which it was accomplished quickly generated a religious atmosphere. There was also a copy in plaster of Rodin’s *Penseur* in which we made holes with blows of a hammer. Jets of China ink came out of the head of the thinker, then we let two thousand little birds loose in the theater. As I told you, I was at the end of the happening, so cleaned of myself that the birds came and landed on my head without my paying any attention.

*What was the meaning of this public demonstration?*

It was like an ordination, the ritual sacrifice of what had, for a long time, molded my life. This happening, at the same time that it made history, ended a period of my life. I left exhausted, battered, and I thought a lot about it. I had always seen, prowling around me, the ghost of darkness, and I felt more than ever that theater should go toward the light. However, I told myself, never forget that the lotus grows out of the mud. One must explore the muck, stir death and dirt to go toward clearer skies. My main concern from then on was to promote positive, enlightened, and liberating theater. So I realized that I needed to become completely different, and I began to practice theater counseling. If someone—no matter who—desired to do theater, I would communicate the following theory: The theater is a magical force, a personal and a nontransmissible experience. It belongs not only to actors but also to the whole world. A decision, a rough resolution, is enough for this force to transform your life. It is time for human beings to let go of conditioned reflexes, hypnotic systems, erroneous self-concepts. World literature devotes many pages to the theme of the “double,” which, little by little, expels a man from his own life, takes over his favorite places, his friendships, his family, his work,

until it makes him an outcast and, at times, his own assassin, according to some versions of the universal myth. For my part, I believe that we are the “double” and not the original.

***You want to say that we identify ourselves with a person who is but a mere caricature of our deeper self?***

Exactly. Our self-concept . . .

***In other words, the idea that we make of ourselves . . .***

Yes, our ego. It doesn't matter the name that we give to this agent of alienation; it is never more than a pale copy, an approximation of our essential self. We identify ourselves with this double that is as erratic as it is illusory. And suddenly, the “original” appears. The ruler begins to take back the place that belongs to him. The limited “me” then feels persecuted, in danger of death, and rightly so. For the “original” will, in the end, dissolve the double. As much as humans identify with the double, we must understand that the frightening invader is nothing but ourselves, our own deeper self. Nothing belongs to us; everything belongs to the “original.” Our only chance is that the Other arises and eliminates us. We do not suffer from this murder, but we will take part. It acts as a sacred sacrifice in which we give ourselves entirely to the master, without anguish.

***How can theater help someone return to the, using your expression, “original”?***

Because we live enclosed in what I call our autoconcept, the idea one has of oneself, why not adopt a completely other point of view? For example, tomorrow, you can be Rimbaud. You will wake up as Rimbaud, and you will brush your teeth; you will dress like him, you will think like him, travel the city like him . . . For one week, twenty-four hours a day, and for no other spectator than yourself, you will be the poet, acting like him with your friends and acquaintances without providing them with any explanation. You will achieve being an author-actor-spectator, producing yourself not in a theater but in real life.

***If I understand right, you explain this theory to your clients, then you create a program for them.***

That's it! I establish a program, an act or a series of acts to accomplish in life in a given time frame: five hours, twelve hours, twenty-four hours . . . An elaborate program based on their problem, designed to crack the character with whom they have identified themselves in order to help them reunite with their deeper self. For an atheist, I made him adopt the personality of a saint for a few weeks. For an indifferent mother, I assigned the duty of imitating maternal love for a century. To a judge, I gave the task of disguising himself as a tramp and go begging at a restaurant. From his pockets, he should take out handfuls of glass doll eyes. I thus created a character intended to establish itself in daily life and to better it. This is how my theatrical research gradually began to take on a therapeutic dimension. From being a director, I turned into a theatrical counselor, giving people their directions to take their place as a character in the comedy of existence.

***I confess that I'm skeptical about the effects of this theatrical therapy, although the idea in***

*itself is very interesting. How can an indifferent mother adopt the character of a loving mother and above all manage to achieve it during her lifetime?*

First of all, do not forget that my clients all suffered being dominated by their double. If they came to me, it was precisely because they felt bad in their role and sensed a completely different nature in themselves than the “original.” The process is founded, then, in a client’s real desire to change. The indifferent mother, for example, suffers from not being able to transmit love to her son. In addition, I believe in the virtues of imitation, in the good sense of the word. A saint engages himself in the “imitation of Jesus Christ.” Why cannot an atheist, in his disbelief, begin to imitate a saint?

*Why not? Exactly. So, all imitation of this type—which is equivalent to what is also called asceticism or spiritual practice—is really not that easy to implement day after day. . .*

I grant you that. But if the mother could be a little less indifferent thanks to this approach and if the atheist took a step toward saintliness, isn’t that marvelous in itself?

# THREE



## THE ONEIRIC ACT

*The interpretation of dreams is a major part of the work of the artist-shaman-director theater-clown mystic in the search for that other form of madness, which is wisdom.*

Yes, although the interpretation of dreams is a practice as old as the world. With time, the only thing that has changed is the forms of interpretations, from a simplistic system, which consists of systematically attributing a concrete symbolic significance to this or that image, to Jung's concept, which holds that one should not explain the dream but rather continue living it, by means of analysis, in the enlightened state, for the end result of seeing where this leads. The next stage, situated beyond all interpretation, consists of entering the lucid dream, in which you know you are dreaming; this knowledge gives you the ability to work on the contents of the dream.

*It is the practice made popular through the writings of Carlos Castaneda.*

He popularized it, but he didn't invent it. Actually, the first book dedicated to lucid dreaming that I know of was published in France: *Les rêves et les moyens de les diriger* [Dreams and How to Direct Them] by Hervey de Saint-Denis. As early as 1867, this author hit on the essential question, as you can appreciate in this excerpt that I want to read to you:

As a dream is like a reflection of real life, the events that appear to take place in it generally follow, even in their incoherence, certain coherent chronological laws within the normal sequence of all true events. I want to say that if, for example, I dream that I have broken my arm, it will appear to me that I wear it in a sling or that I use it gingerly, or if I dream that they close the bedroom shutters, it will seem to me that the light is blocked and that darkness is all around me. From this perspective, I imagined that if, in dreams, I make the gesture of putting a hand over my eyes, I should obtain, in the first place, a similar illusion to what really happens if I do the same thing while awake; that is to say, I would make the images of objects, which appear to be placed in front of me, disappear. Then I asked myself if, after producing this interruption of preexisting visions, my imagination could not more easily evoke new objects, ones that I would fix in my thoughts. Experience follows closely with this reasoning. The placing, in my dream, of a hand on my eyes erased, in that moment, the vision of the countryside during harvest time which, beforehand, I had uselessly tried to change using only the strength of my imagination. I did not see anything for a moment—exactly what happened to me in real life. I then made another energetic call to the memory of the much talked-about eruption of the monster and, as if by magic, this memory, nicely placed now in the focus of my thoughts, suddenly appeared clear, brilliant, stormy; and before I woke up, I had an understanding of how the transition itself operated . . . If we manage to establish a conclusive way for the will to conserve enough strength

during the dream to direct the course of the spirit through the world of illusions and reminiscences (as it directs the body during the day through the events of the real world), we will realize that certain habits of exercising this faculty—joined with being conscious, within our dreams, of the true state—can lead us gradually, through persistence of effort, to very conclusive results. Not only must the dreamer recognize above all that the directing action of his will is reflected in lucid and calm dreams, but he will soon perceive the influence of this same will in his incoherent or passionate dreams. The incoherent dreams will sensibly coordinate themselves under this influence; as for the passionate dreams, full of stormy desires or painful thoughts, the result of this consciousness and of this acquired freedom of spirit will put the painful images aside, favoring, by contrast, happy hopes. The fear of having disagreeable visions will decrease as a result of becoming aware that they are wrong, and the desire to see pleasant images appear will become more effective through recognizing the capacity to evoke them. The desire will soon be stronger than the fear, and since the dominant thought is what makes the images crop up, the agreeable dream will prevail. This, at least, is the way I understand it, in theory, a perceived phenomenon, one that I practice constantly.

Fascinating, right? I don't know if Castaneda would be inspired by this book or if his discoveries coincide with those of the author by chance. What is certain is that this late-nineteenth-century text shows clearly the method that Castaneda would later elucidate. It was André Breton who recommended this reading to me.

***Did you begin to have lucid dreams after having read it, or were you already familiar with the experience?***

I had the great luck of having my first lucid dream at seventeen years old. In this dream, I was in a movie theater watching an animated film worthy of Dali. Suddenly I saw myself seated in the center of the theater, and I knew that I was dreaming. I looked toward the exit, but, as I was not more than an adolescent lacking spiritual training or psychoanalytical ability, I thought: "If I cross this door, I will enter into another world and I will die." And I panicked! My only solution was to wake myself up, and I made enormous efforts to leave the dream, until I felt that I could ascend from the depths toward my body, which seemed to be situated on the surface. I reintegrated into my physical shell, and I woke up. That's how my first experience went, and frankly, it left me terrified. From then on, I began to familiarize myself with the lucid dream.

***How can a person be sure that he is dreaming? After all I also could decide right now, while talking to you, that I am dreaming.***

In the beginning I made a test. I supported myself in the air with my two hands as if on an invisible table, and I propelled myself upward. If I floated, I knew I was dreaming. Quickly, I looped around and began working on the dream. I will read you a lucid dream written in my yellow notebook in 1970, which covers for me an important detail: I made an effort for the first time to practice the technique described here.

*I am alone in an unknown home. Everything seems completely real, but without knowing why, as nothing indicated that, I think, "Maybe I'm dreaming. If I am dreaming, I can fly." I make an effort. I support myself in the air with the palms of my hands, and I propel myself up. I float in the room. "It is a dream!" I tell myself. I decide to take advantage*

*of the opportunity to perfect my flight, and not only to see myself fly but to feel myself fly. I turn over; I go up and down. I am satisfied. I decide to plane glide around the whole house. I fly through a corridor, and I arrive in a dark living room. In the corner, I see two five-year-old boys. I go toward them to see them better: they are not boys but old gnomes, skinny and wrinkled. They laugh and hide. They are the spirits of the house. They have a disturbing air. They avoid me. They disappear in the shadows and laugh at me. They don't dare me to look for them. The dream absorbs me; I lose lucidity . . . I travel in a bus without a conductor or passengers. I look out the window and see a petrified forest. I tell myself, "This is probably a dream. I am going to confirm it." I fly. I get out of the bus by passing through the window glass, and I glide through the forest. I lose lucidity again . . . Now I find myself in a cellar, before an opaque window. I don't hesitate to realize that I am dreaming, and I tell myself, "Surely, this is a dream." I try to exit flying out the window, but I don't achieve this. I have the feeling that the walls have various meters of thickness. But I must get through them. I feel this is impossible. I force myself to try. I pass through the wall without difficulty, and I exit the space. Outside there is a blue sky; I float between the clouds. While I let myself be taken by a soft breeze, I think, "I must take advantage of this dream to see my interior God." Suddenly, I feel a profound exhaustion invade me, obviously caused by a terrible fear. I give myself explanations: "It is too hard a test. I am still not prepared for this meeting; I will leave it for another day."*

And I wake up. On the one hand, I feel content to have discovered this technique that lets me know if I am dreaming, but, on the other hand, I am irritated because of my inability and my lack of value. In my dreams notebook, I write this commentary:

*I believe the moment has arrived to go further in the lucid dream: to run risks. But I'm still scared of dying; I do not dare . . . I cannot have entered into my unconscious until I find the interior God: trust in Him . . . I must pursue the gnomes, confront them, speak to them without confusing myself with their mockery and establish a real contact with them, to know their secrets. I must create worlds, cross Death's path, get to the center of my being, defeat the monsters and the terrors . . . I want to be more courageous next time and overpower my fear. Also, I have to find allies and accept them, not always do all the work alone.*

***I suppose your lucid dream practice passed through different phases.***

I began directing the game. I told myself, "I want to see elephants walking by in Africa." And in a few seconds I was in Africa, seeing a herd of elephants. I could change the set, desire to go to the South Pole and then to see thousands of penguins . . . This gave me such joy that I stopped waking myself up. I have experimented with all kinds of adventures with myself. Once, I wanted to know what it was like to die: I threw myself from the top of a building, and I smashed against the wall. Immediately, I found myself alive in another body, among the multitude that looked at the suicided corpse. This is how I discovered that the brain doesn't know death. Another time, I decided to let myself be possessed by a mythological god.

***Did you have a female orgasm?***

The experience of being penetrated was more complete than that of a usual sexual relation. Don't forget that I worked with oneiric images that exceeded the limits of reality. So that you understand better my practice, I can read the dream exactly as I wrote it down, in detail, in my notebook, with the date April 9, 1978.

*I am in a dorm, spread out between two twin beds. I am supporting my back against the wall. In front of my feet appears an Invunche. . .*

***An Invunche?***

Yes. I'll explain: The afternoon before the dream, I had been at a café with a Chilean exile whom I

asked about the *mapuche* folklore. He told me that, according to the legend, the witches of Chiloé stole children and mutilated them so that, converted into monsters, they would serve as helpers with the name “Invunche.” I’ll continue:

*. . . a blind dwarf, naked, hairless, with a bird’s beak, stumps for arms, a deformed torso, and bowlegged: a kind of large fetus, as horrible as it was disturbing. And so I think, “It is a god with whom I have to have relations. His faith should breed something in my spirit.” Now I know I am dreaming and that I have the power to guide my dream. I decide to work on this monster with the objective of transforming it into a positive deity. I achieve this. The Invunche acquires good posture, normal features, and turns into a beautiful being, indescribable, like a live statue. I get out from between the beds, and I lay down with my mouth to the sky in the middle of the bedroom. I know that I must be inseminated by a god. I look for my femininity, lifting my legs to do so. A transparent tube, some forty centimeters long, comes out from between the legs of the god. I decide to surrender myself without resistance so that he can introduce the tube between the sex and the anus, this space, the perineum, in Tantra called *chakra muladhara*. I know that I do not have a vagina, and I am not trying anal penetration. The god kneels down between my open legs and begins to penetrate me. His organ rises up my spinal column until I feel it enter my brain. My awareness shatters.*

### ***Impressive . . .***

If you call this cataclysmic explosion “female orgasm,” yes, Gilles, I have experienced it, and it was a marvelous feeling. I felt very emotional letting myself be possessed by this god created from my own monstrosity. Then I dedicated myself to achieving unreachable desires in the state of wakefulness, especially sexual desires, of course. In dreams, I gave myself to fantastic orgies with half-human, half-panther women. Allow me to read to you another annotation made after one of these dreams. Although I want to clarify a point: Before achieving the lucid dream, in which I controlled the images, I had to overcome a series of obstacles that appeared like so many other tests of initiation. Only then could I claim the right to be the owner and god of my dreams. This passage taken from my notebook shows well this aspect of the process:

*I am in an industrial world, without nature, only made up of buildings. It is a border. I do not have identification documents. Three soldiers prevent my passage. I jump the barrier and take off running, pursued by the soldiers. After opening a garage door, I find myself in front of a well a thousand kilometers deep. At the edge of this abyss, I realize that I am dreaming. The pursuers have ceased to exist. I decide to throw myself to the bottom, knowing already that nothing can happen to me. I jump and I fall with a great velocity. I am not afraid. I feel the desire to stop the fall. The fall stops. On the wall there appears a door. I enter and now I am at the entrance of a cathedral.*

*Understand that I have the magical power to make whatever I want appear before my eyes. So, I feel the desire to conduct an erotic experience. I create three women-creatures, half-panther and half-human, crouching or on all-fours. I kiss one on the mouth, and her long lips seem like the vulva’s labia. I try to put my index finger in their sex, under the tail. I possess one while the others scratch me agreeably, and I try to reach orgasm. But inevitably I quit being lucid, and the dream absorbs me and, finally, it turns into a nightmare. I wake up with palpitations . . .*

### ***Where do these experiences reside in the initiation dimension?***

In the special feature of which, at the moment that I began making love with those women animals, the desire overtook me, making me lose lucidity, and the dream escaped my control. I forgot I was dreaming. The same thing happened to me with wealth. When I quit being fascinated by money, my dream quit being lucid. Each time I tried to satisfy my human passions, the script absorbed me and I lost lucidity. It was a big lesson: I finally understood that, in life as in dreams, in order to remain lucid it is necessary to distance oneself, to not identify oneself with the action. It is an old spiritual principle that the lucid dream made me remember. Desire and fear are, as all traditions affirm, the two faces of our identity.

Justifiably, the dream also showed me how to behave in the face of my fears. There was a period in which I often had the same nightmare: I found myself in a desert when a psychic entity surged from the horizon like an immense cloud of negativity with the intent to destroy me. I woke up screaming, soaked in sweat. One day, I got fed up and I decided to offer myself in a sacrifice to this entity. Stronger than the dream, in a state of lucid terror, I told myself, "Okay, I'm going to stop wanting to wake up. You don't have to do anything but come and destroy me." The entity approached and suddenly disappeared. I woke up for a few seconds to return to a light, very pleasurable, and refreshing sleep. So I understood that we ourselves nourish our own terrors. What scares us loses all power over us when we loosen our grip. It is one of the classic events of lucid dreaming. I, thus, made several attempts to control my fear of the final passage while crossing my own death.

*Can you give me other examples of this process?*

Well, it suffices to consult my notebook. Listen:

*I have a strong desire to urinate. I feel the accumulation of liquid in my bladder. In a white bathtub, I piss a huge jet of blood. I know it is serious, but I don't worry. I tell myself, "The liquid is red because I make too much effort. I cannot stop urinating; to change this, I can relax and, with my will, transform the red into yellow." At no moment did I let myself be beat by the anxiety. Little by little, I transform the color. Then the nightmare dominates me again, and again I urinate blood. I take back control of my dream, without losing my cool, and the jet definitely turns amber.*

Another dream:

*I am at a café, in a public plaza. I sit in a corner among the other clients. Suddenly, in the middle of the terrace, a bearded man, crazy and aggressive, takes out a gun. With a burst of frightening laughter, he points the gun at a colleague's temple. Indignant, I rise and tell him he should prove himself with greater delicacy. I remind him that my friend previously attempted suicide by firing a bullet into his head and risks being traumatized by this detestable joke. The madman looks at me and takes aim while murmuring in a sadistic tone, "Fine. Now what?" He waits for me to start to tremble, but I am not afraid. The madman walks around me. I do not move. I know he will not shoot, and I tell him, "You won't do it."*

*"And why not?" he asks.*

*"Because I am too little for your delusions of grandeur."*

Indeed I know this madman, obsessed by his own spirit, cannot truly be interested enough in me to seek to annihilate me. I wake up happy. This, which could have been a nightmare, did not scare me.

Another dream in which I tame my monster:

*I walk upon unknown territory and reach a hole like the mouth of a huge sewer. A horrible, giant monster about twenty meters high springs up. I immediately subdue my distaste, because I know this hideous creature is part of me, an obscure energy of my spirit. I decide not to destroy it but to transform it. So it covers itself with white feathers, turns luminous, deploys six wings, and rises. Turned into a very beautiful angelic entity, he proposes to take me along with him into the cosmos. I overcome the temptation. The angel is the luminous energy of my spirit that I must absorb. I arrange for him to cover me as I sweat from all of the pores in my skin. Now it is I who has turned into a being of light and energy. I rise calmly. I wake up full of joy.*

Now, listen to this very poetic dream where I see myself entering, eyes big and open, the kingdom of the dead:

*I am in the anteroom of death. Seated in front of me on a bench is the singer Carlos Gardel, deceased for forty years. I say hello and he says, "Go ahead, have courage, decide to die." We pass into another room where a door going*

directly to death is found. A gloomy doorman touches everyone present and decides who will go through the last door and who will not. Before us, two adolescents arrive. After they are frisked, the doorman forces them back, and they go, sorry to still have to live. Gardel is declared dead; it is now my turn. The doorman touches me and declares me deceased. Carlos Gardel hesitates, he is afraid, and I tell him, "What does it matter! Good! Now we are going to truly know what is behind this door!" Firmly decided, I push him so that he passes into this dimension with me. Upon passing through the door, the singer disappears into an explosion of light. Having barely crossed the border of death, I find myself in a green landscape. I am in the company of very agreeable people. I throw blank paper envelopes into the air. They fall down again full of sweets and precious objects. I can perform miracles as I dominate this dimension, and I know that the tossed envelopes will always fall back down full. I offer the gifts to the people who accompany me, and I wake up feeling very content.

Finally, a last dream among many others where I find myself once again confronted by monsters:

*I must cross the dark underground on a dirt floor. A stranger waits to let me pass. I divine in the shadows the presence of an animal. I know that it acts like a black panther and that the unknown is the trainer. He signals me to cross directly, without fear. I follow his instructions, but the panther jumps on me, throws me to the ground, and, with his claws, first immobilizes my head. It nibbles at my cranium without hurting me, the way a cat does playing with a mouse. I see the decomposed face of the trainer who watches me at the mercy of his big cat; he feels powerless. The animal never frightens me. Without moving, I let it caress my hair with its mouth. I know I must abandon myself, become one with her, accept the situation with love, dissolve into the panther. I begin to vibrate with love, and I become one with her. At this instant, the panther disappears. I get up, cross the underground, and go on my way. I wake up full of joy.*

***If I understand right, you have applied what you've learned in your dreams to the course of your daily life, and you have afterward integrated these lessons into the practice of Psychomagic.***

Exactly. I have forced myself from day to day to be faithful to what has been given to me to understand in the dream. For what good is it to receive the lessons without applying them to the core of daily troubles? A lesson doesn't become operative, does not acquire its transformative force, until it's applied.

***Can you give me an example of application in daily life of a principle perceived in a dream?***

Well, as I have said, the lucid dream taught me to confront the monster. It's okay to run away if one does not feel strong enough to face it; but the moment comes when one must look it in the eyes. Sometimes, the disguised monster turns into an ally. Our fear nourishes the adversary's hostility while our will to face him with love disarms him, causing his purpose to change. While I shot *The Holy Mountain* in Mexico, there were two scandalous rumors. Because I was shooting in front of a cathedral, they said I celebrated black masses. They also whispered that I ridiculed the army and the Mexican police . . . One day, two police officers called out to me and said, "Such and so minister wants to see you." So they brought me to the office of this minister, who said, more or less, "Listen, Jodorowsky, the president knows you very well. He admires what you do; you have a friend in him. But be careful: Just as a government can be a very good friend, it can, if you displease it, turn into a formidable enemy. Do not show any uniform in the film, erase all of the religious symbols, and you will live in peace." In Mexico, such remarks by the minister were the equivalent of a death threat. Upon returning home that evening, I heard voices in the garden, "Attention, Jodorowsky! We are going to skin you." There was at the time in Mexico a paramilitary group of young people called "the Falcons" who were in charge of the dirty jobs. I understood that all this could turn out badly, so the next day I took all my family to the United States and decided to finish shooting there. However, I did not want this minister to become an enemy, nor did I want the ghosts of any death threats on my

conscience. Once the film was finished, I assembled all of *The Holy Mountain's* good reviews from Europe and the United States. I went back to Mexico, and I asked for a hearing with the minister who remained angry with me for having taken my team and left Mexico. Offering the press clippings, I told him, "See what my film did for Mexico? They talk about it around the world." Aware that I had again put myself in the mouth of the wolf, he smiled and gave me a pat on the back. "It's good, Jodorowsky. You are brave. I applaud you." Not only did he not present any more problems for me, but he even gave me presents! So there is the true antidote, which shows to what point it is sometimes beneficial to dare to brave the monster. The essential principle is, as often as possible, never leave an account unsettled with an enemy. Because, the more things stay at the latent stage, the more hate nourishes it, at the risk of growing. A bomb with a long fuse can be lit years before it explodes, but the day when the detonation occurs, the harm is considerable. It's better to defuse the bomb, to not let the threats of death linger around us or in the unconscious. One never needs to kill the adversary; it works better to transform it, to make it an ally.

***Another principle of the lucid dream consists in consciously changing the content of the dream. How have you applied this in the course of your daily life?***

Well, for example, I have told you that in my dreams I loved to change the scene, to go from Africa to the United States, for example, to transform the environment . . . In the same way, I understood that I should not, in any way, allow myself to be a prisoner of my surroundings in my everyday life. Daily reality is not rigid, or no more so than the conceptions we have in our heads. If we feel ourselves pressured, we can always evolve within the given environment—we're free to change! Who says it is impossible? The lucid dream taught me to move within a subtle reality, where all the mutations, all the transformations can serve at every moment. That depends entirely on my intention. In the lucid dream, the single intention of finding myself in Africa among a herd of elephants transported me there. In this other dream mode—which is "reality"—it is also my brain, the representation that I make in the world, which controls the game. "Reality" does not exist in itself, instant after instant. I create my reality, happy or nightmarish, monotone or passionate.

***Example?***

The other day, when you came to visit me at my home, you noticed I had changed everything. I was tired of the old decor. I bought new furniture, and everything in the house that I did not want anymore I put out on the street. My cleaning out turned into a kind of neighborhood party; people began to help themselves . . . Some days later, the neighbors heckled me, "Ah! We know you!"

"Go on," I replied. "How do you know me? By my comics, my films?"

"By your garbage!" they replied. "We recovered incredible things from in front of your house!"

In short, I not only changed my decor, but I also transformed a bit of the atmosphere of my neighborhood.

***All the same, Alejandro, it is easier, if one has money, to change the furniture than to transport oneself among the African elephants.***

No, the fundamental principle is the same; this all takes place in the head, in our conception of reality!

One can see reality as a nightmare, and God knows that in the worst situation, anything can happen. But it is in this same reality that one can develop lucidity and accomplish responsive acts to transform the negative into positive.

***Some might say this is a question of the purse: if you have a large sum of money, you can effectively take a jet and go to Africa or New York.***

Yes, but one must attract life! Your life corresponds to the conception that you make of it. Well, for example, I have never been a millionaire or even very wealthy, but I have always applied the lucid dream principle to my daily life: why not go there? Thus, I have attracted favorable circumstances when I have had real need. The other day, I had the desire to treat myself to a little escapade. I had been invited to a film festival in Chicago, so I went there secretly for three days. I left on Friday; I came back on Sunday. No one knew. (*Laughter.*)

I remember one day, a billionaire friend asked me, “What are you doing this weekend?”

“Nothing,” I told him.

“You want to go to Acapulco?”

And there it was! His private jet brought us to Acapulco for the weekend.

***As you tell this, it seems very simple, but not everyone runs with billionaires.***

Listen, you are trying to make me a liar, but you know as well as I do, from your own experience, that each person creates his own reality.

I needed to leave for the other side of the world for the weekend. I was intimately convinced of the flexibility of reality, and this sent me a billionaire with a private jet. That’s all! As for you, what you loved in life was meeting sages and listening to rock ’n’ roll. You really wanted to reconcile these two seemingly rather different aspects of your existence. And then, since you did not have a rigid idea of reality, you attracted the adequate circumstances, and you finally found, in Arizona, a true sage who, not content with having created an ashram, is also leader of a rock band. Without a doubt, he is the only such person on the planet. He was then very little known in the United States and totally unknown in Europe, but the magic of life sent him to you all the same. (See Gilles Farcet’s *L’Homme se leve a l’Ouest: Les nouveaux Sages de l’Occident* [The Man Rises to the West: The New Wisdoms of the West].)

Also when you were a youngster, you went to see my films and collected articles about me; and then, here we are! Friends! And we amuse ourselves making books together. In your innocence and determination, you attracted these statistically improbable circumstances.

***Fine . . .***

Listen, let me tell you another story. In 1957, long before I theorized all this, I asked my wife, “Where do you want to go for vacation?”

“I would really like to go to Greece,” she replied.

“Very well,” I replied. “We will go to Greece.”

“But how? We don’t have a penny.”

“We are going to Greece!”

At that moment, someone knocked on the door of the garret where we lived. It was a friend and member of Francisco Marín’s well-known (at the time) South American music group, Los Guaraníes. He said to me, “Listen, we have to leave on tour to Greece in three days to give a show at a folk festival, and one of our dancers has fallen ill. Would you replace him?”

“But I do not know these dances . . .”

“It doesn’t matter. My wife is going to teach you!”

Right away I learned two dances, *Bailecito* and *Carnavalito*. Then, sure as you please, we left for Greece. After that, how can I not consider reality like a dream that belongs to me to create as I go along?

***I agree on the principle; but your anecdotes and the way in which you express them appear to me to be open to confusion. After all, the earth is populated with people who don’t ask for anything but to realize their dreams without effort. Experience shows that to desire is not enough; one must also merit it.***

What you say here appears very important. Of course, these things that I’m telling you happened to me, so I can say that my life is commensurate with my craziest dreams. I truly believe in the magic of reality. But for this magic to operate, it is befitting to cultivate in oneself a certain number of qualities that are at times contradictory, at least in appearance: innocence, self-control, faith, bravery . . . Putting this magic into motion requires a lot of audacity, and also purity, and a lot of work on oneself. So I insist that I devote my existence to perfecting myself, to knowing myself, and to making myself internally accessible. It is important to never lose sight of all the discipline without which this approach to existence would be but an illusion. Life is not there for satisfying the desires of the first sloth that was created! Life is wonderful to us when we abandon ourselves to it and when we overcome our egocentrism.

***Does this asceticism work then include an application of lessons received by means of the lucid dream? Because, in brief, asceticism requires a great deal of effort, unlike the lucid dream where it is enough just to hold the intention for something to be achieved.***

Believe me! To remain conscious within the dream requires a considerable effort.

In addition, the perceived emotions during the dream are very real. If you are terrorized, you really are; you perceive the terror, and it is difficult to face up to things. Finally, the greatest lesson of the lucid dream does not reside as such in the demand for lucidity. So, do not forget that without lucidity, nothing is possible. Thus, as I said, from the instant when one lets oneself be caught up by the experience one crosses into, the dream absorbs us, and the lucidity that was the only guarantor of this initiation dimension ends. The magic we have called forth does not operate except by detachment. What makes the game possible is the lucidity of the witness, whereas identification with consensus reality, on the contrary, shrinks existence and reduces the realm of possibility. In dreams, as in daily life, the same laws operate: The more one is detached, the more one can enjoy perceiving all of

existence as a vast playground. The less one is detached, the more life turns into a dead end. Dreaming thus taught me, paradoxically, to *wake up* and maintain a lucid current as a thread of existence, even if this requires a major effort. Because God knows how marvelous life can be when one is, above all, open to its magic! The danger of identification is the temptation to let oneself be captured by the spell as one opens up. On the other hand, lucidity strengthens itself with practice.

***Another lesson of lucid dreaming, which we have already made allusion to, another facet of magic: the flexibility of the real. Not only do you not hold back life in a rigid process, but you train yourself to be flexible.***

Yes, I pay close attention to not allowing too much self-definition, to not caging myself into a narrow-minded self-vision. In the dream, I can perceive myself as a sixty-year-old man, but also as a young boy, or as an elder, you see, or as a woman, why not? Diverse facets of my being manifest. In reality, I try to let these facets express themselves while responding to the demands of the situation without clinging to a preconceived idea of what I am or what I should be. When I travel, people often ask what is my nationality. If someone strikes up a conversation on an airplane and they say to me, “Are you Italian?” I respond, “Yes.”

If someone takes me for Greek, French, Russian, Israeli—whatever—I always respond with the affirmative. Delighted to have guessed, the person then relates to me as an Italian, a Russian, a Greek, or a Chilean, and that does not change anything. Our adventure the other day at the Marjolaine is a good example of this attitude. When we arrived, the public was not waiting for us; they had come for Dr. Westphaler.

***Dr. Woestlandt, Alejandro.***

Yes, Dr. Wiesen-Wiesen.

***In brief . . .***

I asked you to introduce me as Dr. Westphallus, but you did not dare. Yet, I could have given two hours of lecture under the provisional identity of Dr. Wouf-Wouf. I would have spoken about health and conveyed my message. Little matter who broadcasts it! Little matter who I am! I always behave according to what one desires to see in me. If she expects a filmmaker, I play the filmmaker; if he expects a comic strip writer, I play the writer . . . I accept whatever role, while knowing in my inner conscience that I do not reduce myself to what another perceives of me, to what someone else believes me to be.

***Have you explored other aspects of the lucid dream?***

Later, I wanted to explore other, more metaphysical dimensions: I put myself to the search for my inner master. Permit me, again, to read to you a dream in this decisive respect:

*I am in the company of two ordinary, fat Mexicans whom I sense to be friends although I do not know them. We cross a courtyard and go to the stone wall, which could equally likely be that of a school, a temple, or a government palace. Everything is very spacious. We walk, hugging the wall. Suddenly an enormous telluric hum bursts out. The noise really alarms the Mexicans. One of them exclaims, “An earthquake is coming!” They study the stones, anxiously*

awaiting the first tremors. Beginning to realize then that I was dreaming, I told them, "Do not be afraid; nothing will happen to you. It's a dream." Everything seems, however, so real that I begin to doubt. But, in making the deafening noise stop by force of will, I acquire a certitude that I am really dreaming. Right away, I suggest to myself to make good use of this lucidity. "This time," I tell myself, "I am going to ask to gaze at the Divinity." Although I would be seized by a deep terror, I decided to do it. "Help me to face God," I say to my friends. They place themselves under each of my armpits, resembling human crutches, to help me move toward a staircase of black stones, which comprises twenty-two steps and rises up in the middle of the courtyard like a pedestal. "I now feel capable of facing the Divinity alone," I say to my friends. Knowing they are parts of the dream, I make them disappear with a push, and I begin to climb the steps. Again I am prey to terror. Maybe I am going to see a horrible image stand before me . . . I glide up the stairs, which are covered with water, and I make enormous efforts to avoid sliding. Then an animated photograph appears on which a gigantic actor grimaces like a clown. I can't believe it. "A photo, a role-player, the Divinity . . . this is not possible!" The actor disappears, and I take his place. I am sixty years old and dressed in a cashmere suit. I have the appearance of an old university professor, with glasses on the tip of the nose. I know that this immense image of myself is a necessary veil, the projection of bygone ideals, and that it let me survive without anguish my first meeting with the Divinity. The photo animates itself and begins to speak to me with sympathy. It communicates a message to me; it gives me a lesson. I retain very little of it, not more than a few words: the treasure of humanity. I often replay this first experience, which allows me to make a first step in the search for the inner God, the guide, the master inside of me, the impersonal me—little matter the name that one attributes to it—and this without being in terror. I muster my strength, take support in the air, mount, and put myself to floating. Like a ram, I throw myself against the screen and cross it to topple over into the vault of heaven, a vast infinity spotted with stars. I want to again contemplate my inner God. In front of me appears, huge like Cheops, two interlocked pyramids resembling the Star of David in relief. I tell myself that I must not be content to just look at them—one is black, the other is white—but that I must melt into them. So I penetrate their center, and I explode like a universe on fire.

There you have it: the dream, just as I recorded it. It is from this memorable experience that I wrote the screenplay, *El Incal*.

***So the practice of lucid dreaming consists of planting an act or intention within the oneiric script. Can you go further than the lucid dream?***

Yes, it is possible to go to what I call the therapeutic dream, in which the lucidity is utilized to heal a wound, to make up for a deficiency in the enlightened state. I want to give you four examples taken from my notebook:

*I find myself in the company of Theresa, my paternal grandmother, whom I never had the occasion to meet, following some family quarrels. She is a plump little woman, with a big forehead. In the dream, I realize that we do not really know one another: we have never spoken or even once taken a walk together. I ask her, "How is it possible that you, my grandmother, have never taken me in your arms?" I realize that I'm verging on tactlessness, and I correct myself, "Or rather, how can it be, Grandmother, that I, your grandson, have never hugged you?" I suggest that I do it, and she accepts. We embrace. I wake up in the clear memory of the dream, happy to have found this family archetype.*

Second example:

*I am in my bedroom, such as it is in reality, standing face to face with my father. I say to him, "All my life, you never hugged me like a father. You gave me your fear, and nothing else. But now that I am an adult, I am going to take you in my arms." With that, and without fear, I hug him, kiss him, and rock him. Cradling him this way, I feel with my hands the amazing vigor of his back. With pleasure, I exclaim, "You are ninety years old, and you are still strong!" I continue to cradle him, with audacity and tenderness, and I tell him, "Just as you never communicated with me by touch, I also have deprived my son Axel of physical contact." Axel appears, at the age he is now, twenty-six. I take him in my arms and ask him to rock me as I have just done with my father. I wake up.*

During the day, I chat with Axel, and I tell him joyously that he was part of the dream. I ask him to embrace me and cradle me. A bit shy and bothered at first, he does it by forcing himself and, progressively, the act touches him. We end up having a contact from which we draw a feeling of

well-being and peace. Thus, I achieved in a dream something that was missing in my relationship with my father, which then gave my son the possibility of having it in reality.

Third example:

*I have financial problems and dream that they are going to hire me as an actor in a theater company. I am going to see the producer to discuss my salary. I explain to him that he must pay me very well as "knowing me as I know myself" I am not going to be happy to just act but to also make sure his show goes very well. I will supervise the lighting, the music, the costumes, my comrades' roles, and so forth. Briefly, I am going to occupy myself with everything. The producer understands me and agrees to give me a good salary, what I deserve. I wake up reassured, my confidence in myself regained. I know that my material difficulties are going to be resolved.*

Finally, fourth example: For three days, I suffered strong pains in the stomach, probably an intestinal infection. I couldn't sleep, and I did not want to take antibiotics. I went to bed and dreamed:

*I lie in my bed, prey to the same pains I had while awake. The healer Pachita arrives. She lies on top of me and begins to suck the right side of my neck while saying, "I am going to heal you, little brother." In a supreme effort, she slides my left hand between us and puts it on my stomach. Then she rises in the air without separating from me. We levitate a moment, horizontally, then we descend to the bed. She slowly fades. I wake up cured, without ever feeling any pain again.*

It occurs to me to say that I have thus incorporated healing and that I have access to an inner doctor, a kind of Divinity. I remember that in Mexico, before dying, Pachita made a ring appear in the palm of her hand, and she put it on my left ring finger, then said, "I will come visit you in your dreams."

As you can imagine, dreams like this are tremendously beneficial. They are truly repair dreams, in which the unconscious channels its power to effectively dress the wound.

***If it is possible to use this knowledge acquired in the practice of lucid dreaming to unblock in the therapeutic dream, can you go further, to touch in the dream a dimension of knowledge?***

Yes, and this other stage, I call the humble dream. One day, I stopped planning scenarios, preferring to attend a dream only as an observer. I let it roll, follow its own course, but because I wasn't caught up by it, everything remaining lucid. I am spectator of my own dream, and I abstain from all intervention. In fact, I believe I have recently passed to another level even more subtle that I call the wise dream. At present, the protagonist of the dream I attend, as spectator is a sage. He pronounces speeches, which I take note of upon waking up, which are not original and may be extracts from some sacred text. But from the deepest place in my unconscious, these texts surge just as I observed lucidly during the dream.

***Can you recount some from these "wise dreams"?***

Yes, but not without reluctance . . .

***Why? Are you now going to play modest?***

It does not have to do with that! I simply fear not being believed. (Alejandro extracts from his library an immense notebook that resembles a golden book.) You see it is in this other notebook that I note my most positive dreams. I can open it and read you an example of a wise dream; but will our readers

be ready to admit that a man is able to have such dreams? Maybe you should, first, give me your word of honor . . .

***Why not? This could be kind of surreal: I declare on my honor that you have wisely dreamed . . .***

Okay. I certify then on my honor to have actually had the following dream! Each is free to believe me or not.

***These dreams are that extraordinary?***

No, in fact, they are very simple. What is unusual is precisely the element that makes them sage dreams. Everything is in the interior climate of the dream. (Jodorowsky reads from his big notebook, translating simultaneously as all of his dreams are written in Spanish):

*I find myself in the company of a master in martial arts who is teaching me. He tells me, "Let yourself fall into my arms without tensing up at all." The thought comes to me, "Well, I am going to reach an absolute relaxation," and I let myself fall without tensing up at all. The master receives me, then lays me on the studio floor and tries a capture. I am so relaxed that he does not succeed. He then says to his assistant, "Impossible to fight with him. He is as if dead, and against the dead, one can do nothing."*

You see? An example of a sage dream in which I achieved absolute relaxation. Another example:

*I go out on the street in a tight suit that makes me appear extremely puny. So I tell myself, "It is good that people see me as weak, as I know me and I feel myself so strong on the inside."*

Or, more, this other dream:

*I attend a class of a professor of philosophy who declares, "The secret is to be in thought." And I respond, "If you have not accepted death, you have achieved nothing. Only the acceptance of death delivers us from the thought of death."*

Permit me to give you another reading of two sage dreams:

*Gypsies brought me to their warehouse where they have amassed all sorts of furniture. They want to consult with me, and they show me a cardboard box and a big cutout that looks like the Ace in the Tarot of Marseille. With it, they think to devote themselves to alchemy and discover the universal solvent, the material capable of dissolving all other materials. I smile at them and ask them, "Do you know what the universal solvent is?" Seeing they have no response, I tell them, "It is the blood of Christ. One drop of the blood of Christ on your heart dissolves all other feelings. So only love lasts."*

*A depressed child tells me, "I am insignificant. I have no value. God does not see me. He is occupied with more important things." I respond, "You represent the surface of a sphere composed of infinite points. Imagine now the center of this sphere: it is a lone point, which is, at the same time, communicating with all the other points."*

***I was expecting your dreams to be a bit more crazy, a proliferation of symbols of initiations, like in your films or comic strips. The dreams that you tell of here are a bit more sober, unusual for you.***

Well, my comic books and my films correspond with the lucid dream.

As you have seen, these dreams are often very short. Their special character resides in their impact and in the sensation that I have of myself in them. In the dream, I am a sage, detached, happy, and this

sensation persists for a time upon waking.

***I would like for you to now give some examples of the “humble” dreams.***

Here is a typical dream in which I admire the value of others:

*I find myself in the home of friends. I am in the company of an undistinguished woman who, however, has a very distinguished style. She can't have been more than fifty-eight years old. I find her very perceptive, extremely kind, and understanding. After a moment, she asks me, "Do you know who I am?" I reply in the negative. "I am Christine," she says. "It is I who cared for you when you were an infant." I realize then that I've found myself in the presence of my first nanny. I then say to my friends, "Understand this! She is the first woman I ever loved!" Knowing that she is still living and has reached such a degree of evolution gives me great joy. Christine and I embrace, then she goes. My friends then say to me, in a very affirmative tone, "She is eighty years old and yet she seems so young!" I wake up with joy in my heart.*

Another example:

*I am surprised in the middle of the road by a student rebellion. The youths burn cars, and there are police officers everywhere. Someone shoots a machine gun, so I lie on the ground without feeling any fear. A policeman takes me in. I am interrogated: I remain calm. I have in my pockets heaps of antimilitary tracts as well as newspaper clippings of rather funny facts showing the police and military in their ridiculousness. I explain to them that I am a professor of the tarot, and they release me. I walk the streets. My suit is a wreck, and I have even lost my shoes. Instead of shoes, I slide the tips of my feet into an eyeglass case. I enter a café to ask directions. Among the clients, a plump-enough woman of the popular kind, who seems full of goodness, looks sadly at me as she takes me for a hobo. She murmurs, "Look what a state this poor man is in. Something must be done." She takes me for a derelict. I find her to be so good, and I am so touched by her charity that I decide not to set her straight. I resolve to accept the role that she gives so as not to disappoint her, and I permit her to freely give course to these good feelings. I open my black leather suitcase and look for a little game of tarot that I can offer her. Among the tarots, there is a bottle of pills. They are vitamins, but the woman is persuaded that I transport drugs, and she experiences even greater pity. Without knowing anything about the tarot, she takes a card, that of the Magician. "Bad," says she. "You should not carry this card. Look: the young man has a pill between his fingers." She actually takes the yellow circle from between the Magician's fingers. I tell her thank you for her good intentions, and I promise to no longer use drugs. I leave the café. At no point do I have the intention to make myself seem important; to the contrary: it is with joy that I am abased.*

***Do you make distinctions among other kinds of dreams?***

Of course! There are “generous dreams” in which the dreamer shares with the rest of humanity what he has learned. For example:

*I find myself in an immense space, flying over a peace march of millions of demonstrators. I suddenly realize that I am dreaming. I go around in the air in order to attract their attention. The public reacts in admiration upon seeing me levitated. I ask them all to join hands and form a huge chain so they can fly with me. Upon touching them, I make them rise and try to make them fly by force of my thoughts, but they do not move. I must touch them with tenderness, hang on to them. They then fly toward me, and we give ourselves up to the exercise of drawing figures in the sky, all together in a chain, until I wake up.*

To know not only how to give but also how to receive, to accept the service that another can give, is equally part of the art of generosity. This I understood from the following dream:

*I am in Paris. The newspapers have a problem with the government, as it did not provide the raw material for printing. France-Soir feels obligated to publish with a typewriter and print according to a primitive process using sugar. At the side of a newspaper stand, seated in front of a wooden table, is Bernadette, the deceased mother of my eldest son, Brontis. I sit facing her, and I find her beautiful, happy, as she rarely was in her life. Unlike before her death, she is totally positive toward me. Now, she inspires my self-confidence; I know I can count on her. Realizing that I am*

*dreaming, I tell myself, "Bernadette is dead, but in the dream she lives. To speak with the dead does not scare me. I trust her. It is an archetype, which can be useful to me, since she knows politics (in which I am totally ignorant) and will always be available whenever I want to consult her on this subject." Bernadette begins to explain why the situation is so tense, and why the president is wrong to trust the minister he has just named. Then she speaks to me of the future, "We live," she tells me, "in the idea that the future does not belong to us, that it is not for us . . . although we are totally tied together with the future. In the future, we will be very active." I think she makes reference to the future in general, the millions of years remaining to know the universe.*

After this dream, I very lucidly delighted in this reconciliation with the mother of my son, all the more so as we lived with so much conflict. Bernadette became an ally who proposed to collaborate on the perfecting of my spirit while adding the best of herself. I have thus accepted her new presence in my life, through the dream.

***Lucid dream, therapeutic dream, sage dream, humble dream, generous dream . . . What is for you the ultimate dream, the oneiric ne plus ultra?***

The magical, creative dream. All these years of oneiric exploration, I have only known one. Here it is:

*I am in my bedroom. Supporting myself in the air with my hands, I take off. I decide to feel all the power of my voice. Letting the song come to me, I emit, with an almost limitless force, sounds, which go well beyond those of the opera. The voice does not depend on me: I invoke it and it comes. I don't have to do more than let it out through my mouth to discover it, living magic . . . Very touched, I feel I have opened a dimension of myself unknown until now. In plain lucidity, I open my eyes, and I wake up. I note that my heart beats fast. Without moving, I recall all the details of the dream. Suddenly, a song not far and not close comes to my ears. It is not emitted from a human voice, but it cannot be less than human resonance—as if all the neighborhoods in the city were singing. This song seems to arise out of another dimension. I tell myself that I am still half asleep, and I must observe more lucidly what happens. The phenomenon repeats, and I abandon myself to listening, especially since this totally new and extraordinary experience alters the rhythm of my heart. On the one hand, I believe myself prey to hallucination; on the other hand, it appears to me that a little door opens that could be called the third ear, like one speaks of the third eye, a door of clear hearing . . . I sleep deeply and, in another dream, I see myself on a street in Montmartre. I walk murmuring, "It was a divine voice, the voice of a goddess. She does not come from a throat but was exhaled by reality itself. She comes from the streets, from the homes and from the air . . ."*

***Superb! Now, come back to the dream called reality. Can we, as some sages affirm, envision our life like a dream from which we must wake up?***

I would say rather that one must turn this unconscious dream that is more often our life into a lucid dream. At one time, I had the habit of, before going to sleep, reviewing all the events of my day. I replayed them like a film from first to last then in reverse, according to the advice of an old book of magic. This practice of "walking backward" allowed me to distance myself from the incidents of the day. After having analyzed, judged, and taken part in the first exam, I would return to pass through the day again in reverse, and so I found myself in a detached state. Reality thus captured takes on the same qualities as a lucid dream. Through this activity I saw at what point, like everyone, I dream my dream! To review my day at night compares to remembering my dreams in the morning.

The sole fact of remembering a dream is already like organizing it. I do not see the dream again just as it was, but I see selected parts of it. On the same note, seeing again the last twenty-four hours, I do not have access to all the events of the day but only to those that I have retained. This selection already constitutes an interpretation on which, additionally, I patch my judgments, my appreciations . . . To become more conscious, we can begin to distinguish our subjective perception of the day from

the objective reality. When one does not confuse these anymore, one is able to attend as a spectator the unwinding of the passing day, without being carried away by judgments and appraisals. From this position as witness, it becomes possible to interpret one's life as one interprets a dream. Permit me to give you an example of the application of this approach: One of my students, named Guy Mauchamp, one day asked me for advice. He did not know how to take some young dishonest punks squatting in the house that belonged to him. Surprised that he had not called the police, since the law was on his side, I told him, "In a certain way, this situation suits you. Thanks to it, you are expressing an old distress. I suggest the following approach: Consider this situation as a dream. Try to interpret it as you would a dream you had the previous night. Do you have a younger brother?" He responded in the affirmative, and I asked him then if, in his infancy, he had not felt betrayed by this baby capturing the attention of his parents. He, of course, confirmed that he had. I quickly interrogated him about the relationship he maintains today with the brother in question. As I expected, Guy confessed to me that they had a bad rapport and never saw one another. I explained to him that it was he himself who maintained this encroaching situation with the squatters in order to express the distress caused by the arrival of his brother. I added that he needed to forgive his brother, treat him well, and make peace with him if he wanted the situation resolved. I gave him psychomagic advice and, a week later, I received a post card from Strasbourg, "Firecrackers over the cathedral—big explosion of sacred joy," with the following message: "Following my question, you prescribed a psychomagic act, and I give you the end results. It resulted that I gave my brother a bouquet of flowers and treated him to a bite to eat as we renewed our fraternal rapport and put the past, when I felt betrayed by him, aside. The goal was to obtain the departure from my house of the fraudulent and illegal renters. I offered the flowers to my brother and spoke with him Friday noon. Friday night, the two squatters left—with my furniture! But finally they are gone, and I can return to my home. Thank you." Interesting, no? Taking the furniture was like taking some of Guy's past.

***So, you had asked this young man to interpret an existential situation as if it were a dream filled with symbols to decipher.***

Exactly. Since we dream our life, we will interpret it and discover what it wants to say to us, the messages that it wants to transmit to us, as if transforming it into a lucid dream. Once the lucidity is reached, we are free to act in reality, knowing that if we seek only to satisfy our egotistical desires, we will be taken, we will lose all detachment, all control, and all possibility for a true act. To live amusing and effective lives—as much in the nocturnal dream as in the diurnal dream that we call our life—we must become less and less involved.

***This detachment, which does not prevent action or compassion and does not authorize greed or sentimentality, looks a lot like wisdom.***

Of course! What good is it to live with the dreams and to make an effort at lucidity if not to move toward wisdom? Reality is a dream on which we must work in order to progressively pass from the unconscious dream, lacking all lucidity, and which can be a nightmare, to what I call the sage dream.

***And the Enlightened? The spiritual traditions say those that are Enlightened . . .***

To wake up is to stop dreaming, to vanish from this oneiric universe, to become the dreamer.



# FOUR



## THE MAGIC ACT

*How does one pass from the oneiric act to the magic act? Above all, what is the magic act according to Jodorowsky?*

As I have said, it was in Mexico where I acquired a true command of the oneiric act. If Chile was, in the past, a poetic country, Mexico is an absolutely oneiric country where the unconscious flourishes. Any person just a little bit sensitive feels this dimension there, understands this dream presence in the very texture of Mexican reality. On the other hand, you could travel there for ten years without ever catching a glimpse of the Mexico magic. Mexico City comprises a whole world of sorcerers, a world that is very costly for uninformed foreigners to enter. When people are in bad shape or when things are not going well, they pay a call to a sorcerer who carries out a kind of purification. She scrubs the whole body using a heap of herbs soaked in holy water. This is an extremely common practice, and not only among the peasants. Intellectuals and politicians do not hesitate to devote themselves to it; so much is witchcraft part of Mexican life. Among these sorcerers, there are, of course, healers expert in hallucinogenic mushrooms and medicinal plants. Some are acquainted with up to three thousand herbs. Others use animal excrement exclusively. There are also bizarre creatures presenting phenomena that may be swindle or may be magic. For example, I remember a woman from a remote village who always went about scantily dressed in a nightshirt: steel spikes came out of her whole body.

Black magic is also practiced, and a number of sorcerers operate with evil spells. You can ask these sorcerers to cast an evil spell on an enemy. I have personally been witness to some things. For example, in one of my shows, I made fun of an influential woman whom everyone called *la Tigresa* and said she was the president's mistress. My actors refused to perform, convinced that *la Tigresa* had cast a spell over the theater. So I agreed to have a sorcerer's assistant come to lift the spell. I have to admit that I laughed when I saw him splash the theater with holy water. But then, while we had a coffee, he began to complain, and an immense boil pushed its way out onto his anus. This sudden eruption grew to such proportions that he had to go to the hospital. There was no doubt in his mind that he had absorbed into his body the bad spell cast over the theater.

*Psychosomatic reaction?*

It's possible. But in any case, sometimes strange things happen . . . One day, a director of a fine arts school with whom I had just signed a contract told me, "You are naive. You swear by Mexico. Everything seems wonderful to you. But if you dare to look here in this drawer, you will discover there another aspect of this country." So I moved near the drawer, opened it, and straightaway was overcome by an atrocious headache.

### ***What then did this infernal drawer contain?***

Horrible wax statuettes used by sorcerers to torture from afar the designated victims of their clients. Their features were, in themselves, so horrible to look at that I felt faint. If they were exhibited at Beaubourg or the Louvre, the public could see what power an art object can have, beneficial or maleficent. A work bearing such energy directly affects the organism of anyone who contemplates it. Although strongly disagreeable in itself, this experience made me wonder. I asked myself what could a beneficial artist be: the good magician whose works of art would be charged with such a positive force that they would push a spectator into ecstasy. It is a principle that served me thereafter in Psychomagic.

### ***Can you give me an example?***

I received a visit one day from a mother whose son was homosexual. This woman had never accepted her son's difference. While continuing to devote a real affection to him, she felt real shame. The son wanted to become a pianist, but each time he took an exam or gave a concert, his mother panicked fearing his failure. The poor boy felt it and was so disturbed that he indeed failed. I quickly realized that this woman saw the pianist profession as an effeminate activity, one of homosexual character. So I gave her an exercise. The sorcerers who cast spells make little effigies of their victim then riddle it with pins. I asked this mother to proceed in the same way. So she made a figurine in the image of her son and used bitten fingernails, hair, and a piece of the boy's clothing so that the object would be truly soaked with his energy. In accordance with my instructions, she glued a gold Louis under each foot and sprinkled a drop of white wine on each of the chakras. She splashed the statuette with holy water and placed it on the side of a piano with honey-coated keys—symbol of smoothness, sweetness. She left a candle constantly burning in the room, and for one hour each day, she came to pray for the success of her son. The following concert was a success, and the pianist's relationship with his mother was transformed.

### ***Is that good magic?***

No, it is Psychomagic! Later, we will get back to the principles of Psychomagic, but I gave this example to show how I was inspired by the standard practice of black magic in Mexico. I wanted to reverse the process: if it can do evil from a distance, why not do good?

### ***Okay, but it is not enough to have good intentions and simulate the reverse of popular evil spells. How do similar practices work?***

Son and mother are connected psychically. If the mother had not made a step in the direction of adopting a different attitude—and performing the psychomagic act with the effigy came to embody the change, to confer a solidity, a materiality that would have otherwise been absent—the son would feel it, even if he were far away. He cannot but react. As the mother could not rationally accept the homosexuality of her child and forgive him, I gave her the concrete possibility of making a step in that direction by complying with a prearranged meticulous ceremony. That is the language the unconscious can understand. In the traditional analysis, it has to do with detecting messages sent by the unconscious and interpreting them into everyday language. Me, I do the reverse: I send messages to

the unconscious using appropriate symbolic language. In Psychomagic, it is the unconscious that deciphers the information transported by the conscious.

***If I understand you well, one must, in Psychomagic, learn to speak the language of the unconscious in order to consciously send it messages.***

Exactly. And if one directly addresses the unconscious in its own language, in theory it is going to answer. But we will get to that. For now, I would like to explain how the magic act contributed to the advent of Psychomagic. While in Mexico, I found myself confronted with the power of harmful sorcery. I, very naturally, asked the same power of beneficial sorcery. If those forces could be put to the service of evil, couldn't they be used for the service of good? I also searched for a good wizard. Then a friend spoke to me of the famous Pachita, a small, good eighty-year-old woman. People came from far away to consult her in the hope of being healed. I was very moved by the prospect of meeting this famous sorceress, so I prepared myself for this.

***What do you mean "moved"?***

I had my guard up. After all, nothing guaranteed me that this woman wasn't also evil. In Mexico, there are very dangerous sorcerers who can covertly introduce a little soreness into the unconscious of a visitor and trigger a delayed reaction. You see, at first you don't feel a thing, but at the end of three or six months, you're in agony . . . I therefore protected myself when I visited Pachita. You understand, she wasn't just any sorceress: her consultations could easily attract three thousand visitors. I tell you, it was sometimes necessary to evacuate her by helicopter. So it suited me to take precautions.

***How does one protect oneself from the influence of a sorcerer?***

It was in a way my first psychomagic act. Above all, I felt that at all costs, I had to disguise myself. To go to her in the fullness of my old identity was to expose myself to the worst. So I began by dressing myself in brand new clothing from head to toe. It was important that my clothes not be chosen by me. I gave money and my measurements to three friends and asked them to go buy all the clothing they wanted to.

***Why three friends?***

For depersonalization and so that the outfit thus obtained did not reflect the taste of any particular individual. Socks, underwear, everything had to be absolutely new. It was not until I departed for the meeting with Pachita that I put on these new garments. In addition, I prepared a false identity card: another name, another birth date, another photo . . .

I bought a slab of pork, wrapped it in silver paper, and put it in my pocket as a reminder. So each time I put my hand in my pocket, the rather unusual contact with the meat would remind me that I was in a special situation and that I should avoid letting myself get caught up, no matter what happened. I arrived at the apartment where Pachita was operating that day, and I found myself in the presence of about thirty other people, some of whom occupied important social positions. I should point out that I met her under relatively privileged conditions, far from those crazies who press around her while she operates in a public place. I made myself part of the intelligentsia. Although she had never been to the

cinema, Pachita knew that I was a filmmaker, director of the film *El Topo*, which had been talked about a lot. I approached and saw a tiny old woman, stocky and nearly blind. Her forehead was rounded and her nose fell downward giving her the appearance of a monster. I had just entered when she tossed me a piercing look and heckled me, “Boy, my boy!”—it was a little strange to hear myself called “boy” at more than forty years old—“What are you are afraid of? Get closer to this poor old lady.”

Slowly, I got near her, stupefied. She had used the right expression to address me. At this age, indeed, I was not mature. While I was no child, my level of maturity was not really that of a forty-year-old man. At heart, I had remained an adolescent.

“What do you want from me? What do you want from this poor old lady?” she asked me.

“You are a healer, right?” I responded. “I would like to see your hands.”

To general astonishment—everyone wondered why she suddenly granted me so much importance—she put her hand in mine. This old lady’s hand had such softness, such purity . . . It could have belonged to a young girl of fifteen. I couldn’t believe my senses.

“Oh!” I exclaimed. “You have the hand of a young girl, of a beautiful young girl!”

At that moment, instantly, I was invaded by a feeling, difficult to describe. Facing this deformed old woman, I felt myself in the presence of an ideal adolescent, the girl that the young man in me had always searched for. She had her hand raised, palm toward me, and it clearly appeared to receive something. I was completely lost, and I did not know what to do. From her assistants a murmur arose. “Accept the gift,” they all told me, “accept it!” I thought quickly: the gift of Pachita is of an unspeakable nature; but I wanted to act like I accepted the invisible gift. So I made a gesture as if taking something in my hand. But as soon as I approached her, I saw something shining between her ring finger and middle finger. I seized the metallic object that was nothing other than an eye on the inside of a triangle. Now, it was precisely the symbol of *El Topo* . . . I began to draw some conclusions from this—at the very least—striking experience: “This woman is an exceptional magician. When she first put her hand in mine, I clearly felt that she was not hiding anything. She had prepared her blow, but how did she make this eye emerge from out of nowhere? How did she know this object was the symbol of my film? In any case, she had me.” I then asked her if I could serve as her assistant, and she immediately accepted.

“Yes,” she told me. “You will be the one to read the poem that will cause me to go into trance.”

So I began to recite a consecrated poem to the divinized Mexican hero, Cuauhtémoc. Suddenly, this shriveled old lady let out an enormous cry, close to the roaring of a lion, and she began to speak in a man’s voice, “My friends, I am happy to be among you. Bring me the first of the sick!”

The patients began to line up, each holding an egg in his hand. After rubbing their whole bodies with it, the sorceress broke it and examined the white and the yellow to detect the evil . . . If she found nothing grave, she prescribed infusions, or sometimes stranger things like café au lait enemas. It happened that she advised eating termite eggs and making a plaster with mashed potatoes and human excrement . . . When she judged the problem serious, she proposed a “surgical operation.” Witnessing these interventions, I saw incredible things; compared to these operations, the work of Filipino healers would seem innocent.

**Example?**

Oh! I could tell you of hundreds of operations. Later, indeed, I continued to serve as her assistant. I wanted to be the first to scrutinize the phenomenon, and thus I was witness to the most unprecedented things. I'll first describe the ambiance. The majority of the time Pachita operated at her home at the rate of one or two sessions per week. This apartment was pervaded by a pestilential odor because she gathered up all the sick animals in the neighborhood to live there for a time and do their business . . . It was torture to wait in this place breathing in the dog, cat, parakeet droppings . . . Yet, as soon as Pachita entered the room to operate, the odor seemed to disappear just from her presence. Without a doubt, it was her incredible presence, the allure of a queen who made us forget these nauseating fragrances. This little old lady had the aura of a great reincarnated lama.

### ***What do you believe made her so impressive?***

I often asked myself . . . Because in the end Pachita impressed the disbelievers as well as the followers! What is certain is that she was disposed of an energy superior to the normal. One day, the wife of the president of the Republic of Mexico invited her to a reception given on the patio of the government palace where a number of cages held a great variety of birds. When Pachita arrived, these hundreds of sleeping birds at once woke up and began to chirp as if to greet the dawn. There were a number of witnesses there to confirm this incident. But she did not leave it to her charisma alone. She knew how to create an ambiance around her appropriate to captivating the guest and the patient alike. Her house was kept in semidarkness; thick curtains prevented any light from entering and were so effective that arriving from outside, one was plunged into a world of darkness. Some assistants—all of whom were convinced of the objective existence of the “*hermanito*” (little brother), as Pachita had named the spirit that she supposedly contacted and who, in her opinion, worked the healing—led the newcomer down the hall in his sudden blindness. These assistants played, it seems to me, a key role in the smoothness of the “operations.”

### ***You mean to say they helped the sorceress execute the conjuring?***

It could be that Pachita was a genius conjurer . . . In fact, it will never be known. What's for sure is that all these assistants, in the role they played, were not accomplices to trickery; all of them had an immense faith in “the Little Brother.” In the eyes of these brave people, the *hermanito* was the one that mattered. Pachita was but an excellent healer; a “channel,” as one would say today, an instrument of God. They respected the old lady, but they did not venerate her until she was in trance. For them, the disembodied being was more real than the person in the flesh through which he manifested. This faith by which Pachita was surrounded generated a magic atmosphere, which contributed to persuading the patient of his chances for a cure.

### ***How would an ordinary consultation with Pachita proceed?***

Seated in an obscure hall, a group of clients waited their turn to enter the room where the sorceress operated. All the assistants spoke with low voices, like in a temple. At times, one left the “operating room” concealing a mysterious bundle in his hands. He went into the bathroom, and by the half-opened door, those in the waiting area could see the glow of a burning object. The assistant came out and murmured, “Do not go in there before the evil is burned. As long as it is active, it is dangerous to approach. You could catch it.” What was this “evil”? The waiting clients didn't know anything, but

knowing they had to hold their urine as long as the immolation lasted created a strange impression. Little by little, they were leaving consensus reality, to topple over into a completely irrational parallel world. Then suddenly, from the operating room, four assistants appeared carrying an inert body wrapped in a bloodstained cloth. They put the body down like a corpse. Indeed, once the operation was over and the bandages in place, Pachita required the patient's absolute immobility for a half hour—or sudden death. Fearing being crushed by magic forces, the recovering patients do not make even the slightest movement. Immobile as a rock, they definitely appear dead. It goes without saying that this clever staging puts the next candidate into a state. When Pachita calls in a deep voice, always using the same expression, “It is now your turn, darling child of my soul,” that generally makes them shake and regress into childhood. In this sense, this sorceress does not treat adults but children, and all are treated as such, whatever their age. I once saw her give a bonbon to a minister and ask him in a serious and tender voice, “What hurts you, my little boy?” People give up body and soul to her, taking her as an antidote for their terror.

*You have described the ambiance and the preliminaries, which is certainly very important; but I would like to know how the operation itself proceeds in general. As “assistant,” you were a privileged witness.*

Only up to a point, because I was, like the others, captivated by the magical ambiance! Pachita always had the patient lie on a cot, by the light of a candle, because the internal organs in her opinion faced damage from electric lights. She marked the place on the body where she was going to “operate” and surrounded it with alcohol-soaked cotton. The odor filled the room, enhancing the “operating room” atmosphere. The healer was always followed by two helpers—I was often one of these two assistants—as well as half a dozen followers who were forbidden to cross their legs, arms, or fingers, so that energy could circulate freely. At her side, I saw her finger sink almost entirely into the eye of a blind man . . . I watched her “change the heart” of a patient: with her hands, she seemed to open his chest; the blood ran . . .

She made me plunge my hand into the wound. I felt the flesh wriggle, and I withdrew my fingers, bloodied. From a jar to the side, I passed her a heart from who knows where—from the morgue or the hospital—that she “transplanted” to the patient in a magical way. Soon after being placed on the chest, the heart seemed to be absorbed and disappeared just like that, as if inhaled by the body of the patient. This phenomenon of “inhalation” was common with all of the “transplants”: she would place a piece of intestine on the person being operated on and no sooner would it disappear into him. I saw her open a head and put her hands in it. There was an odor of burning bone, the sounds of liquid . . . The operations were not lacking in violence and constituted a rather shocking show, in Mexican fashion, but Pachita showed, at the same time, an extraordinary softness.

*What was the role of the followers present?*

The sorceress relied on their presence. Should an operation seem to be going badly, both Pachita and the patient would solicit the active help of all the people present.

*Can you give me an example?*

I remember an operation during which *El Hermanito* screamed sharply from Pachita's mouth, “The

child is getting cold! Quick, heat the air or we are going to lose him.” A second later, we were all running, on the verge of hysteria, in search of an electric heater. As soon as we plugged it in, we realized the electricity was out! “Do something or the child is going to be in agony!” growled the Little Brother, while the patient, on the verge of cardiac arrest from actually seeing his stomach opened and the guts in the air, whimpered, frozen in terror, “My brothers, I beseech you, help me!” And we all gathered around and put our mouths against his body, blowing on it with all our might, worried, forgetting about ourselves, trying frantically to warm him with our breath. “Very good, my children, my dears,” the Little Brother cried suddenly. “The temperature is back up, and the danger is passed. I can continue.”

***Did you ever lose a patient?***

No. To my knowledge, Pachita has never killed a person while trying to heal him, even if the operations often had critical moments. That seemed in a certain way to be part of the process.

***Did the patients suffer?***

In general, yes. The operations could be painful. When Pachita died, her gift was transferred to her son Enrique, who operates like his mother. When I assisted him, I noticed that the *hermanito* spoke more sweetly and that the knife no longer caused pain.

I remarked about this to one of the assistants who responded, “From incarnation to incarnation, *El Hermanito* makes progress. He has learned recently to not make his patients suffer.”

***You have said that Pachita showed a lot of tenderness, in spite of her big knife. You were treated by her yourself, weren't you?***

Yes, I had a pain in my liver, and I was curious to try having an “operation” myself. Pachita told me that I had a tumor on my liver, and she agreed to treat me. I decided to make a game of it, telling myself that she couldn't possibly kill me. Because, of all the people she had operated on, there had not been a single mishap. The time had come to put myself on the hot seat.

***And you weren't afraid, about the pain?***

No, because for me it was all theater. I wanted to undergo an operation to see what would happen. But when I found myself on the bed in front of Pachita, with a huge knife in her hand and surrounded by her praying followers, I did begin to feel afraid. I would very much have liked to get up and leave, but it was too late. I realized that she was cutting me with her scissors . . .

I felt the pain of my flesh being cut with scissors. Blood ran, and I thought I was going to die. After she made the cut in my stomach, it felt like my belly had been ripped open. I had never felt that bad in my life. For about eight minutes, I suffered atrociously, and I went completely white. Pachita made me drink some herbal tea, and then I could feel blood rushing through my body again. Then she acted like she was pulling out my liver . . . Finally, she passed her hands over my stomach to close the wound. And the pain instantly disappeared! If it was sleight of hand, the illusion was perfect. Not only did those present see the blood running and my opened belly, but they also felt the same pain as the

patient. Since then, my liver has never bothered me. Leaving aside the cure, that was one of the greatest experiences of my life. That woman was something spectacular, as impressive as a mystical Tibetan lama. Never had I felt so much pain, nor so much gratitude, as in that moment when she told me I was cured and that I could go. In that instant, I saw in her the Mother Goddess. What a psychological shock! Pachita was a great psychologist; she knew the human soul.

### *Were you ever afraid with Pachita again?*

Oh yes, she knew very well how to use terror therapy. On this subject, I would like to cite, as written testimony, my ex-wife, Valérie Trumblay, who was assistant to the healer at the same time I was:

After suffering a miscarriage—I lost the baby from dancing too much during a theatrical tryout—I had pain in my ovaries. The doctors did not find the cause, and they saw in the symptoms psychosomatic effects from feelings of guilt. Whatever the cause, the pain was real, unbearable, and lasted for months . . . I decided to consult Pachita. She touched my stomach, without even having me undress, and she told me, “You were pregnant with twins. You still have a dead fetus inside you. I will have to operate—soon. Come back on Friday in the afternoon with a package of cotton, a bandage, and a liter of alcohol. Drink this tea for the three days preceding the operation.” On Friday, Pachita, in trance, had me assist with an operation before my appointment. The Little Brother opened a body, took out a beating heart, and put in another (which she said had been bought at a hospital). Pachita had me touch the entrails, close the wound with a single sweep of my hand, and organize the helpers to bring the patient into the recovery room. “Now you,” the witch then told me. I started to shake from head to toe, my teeth chattered, I was sweating. When I saw her lift the bloody knife, I fell on the floor, and I stayed there terrified. So the Little Brother told me, severely, through the mouth of Pachita, who suddenly acquired the hoarse voice of a man: “Calm yourself and lie down here. If not, I cannot do anything and your ovaries will catch gangrene.” With a lot of difficulty, I got up and laid myself on the folding bed. While a helper raised my skirt to show my stomach, the others began to pray under a painting of Cuauhtémoc, the adored emperor who, according to them, was none other than the spirit who possessed the witch. She soaked the cotton with alcohol and put it on my stomach, around the area marked to be cut. Then, very quickly, with the cold blow of a surgeon, she opened my stomach. I felt a live pain, I heard sounds of liquid, I perceived the smell of blood, and I believed I was dead. The three minutes of the operation seemed interminable; my heart beat a thousand times per second, my guts were in the open, and my whole body was frozen. But she, or better said, the Little Brother, was unruffled: not a word, not a useless gesture, an incredible precision. Suddenly, I felt a sharp pain, as if they tore off a fragment of viscera, and Pachita showed me a black and viscose thing, which looked like a squid. “This is the fetus. It is rotten.” The smell was unbearable. “Bring me that bag,” she ordered. The helpers ran to the kitchen and returned with a plastic supermarket bag. With great care, Pachita made a package and tied it with a red belt and gave it to her son saying, “Tonight you will throw this into the canal, into the dark waters, with your back turned on it, and you will leave without looking back. Malignant things are caught in glimpses . . .” Then she closed the wound with her hands, and the pain disappeared in an instant, as did the fear. She bandaged my stomach, and she ordered me to rest for three days and to drink a liquid prepared especially for me. As I was the last patient of the day, at this time Pachita had to restore her own body and

have the Little Brother return to his kingdom. I began to cry so hard that my sobs seemed to take over the little room. While the helpers prayed that Pachita would return to being a woman, I heard a little voice crying, shouting in the corridor, "Mommy, mommy . . ." It seemed to me that only I could hear it, and I exclaimed, "Outside there, there is a child calling for her mommy." They ordered me, severely, to quiet down and to let the vampire go. After a month, I could walk normally. A very sharp pain perforated my stomach at the tiniest sudden movement. But the result of the operation was unequivocal: I never again suffered pain of the ovaries, after so much agony. Since then, I converted into a faithful follower of Pachita and, in the company of Alejandro, I have assisted many operations. I cannot affirm categorically if what I saw was real or an illusion, but regardless of what I saw, this woman cured those who had faith in her and, above all, in the Little Brother. Pachita dedicated her entire life to those who suffer. If that was a trap, it had to be a "sacred trap" as Alejandro would say.

Now I would like to relate a failure that, seems to me, was due to a lack of faith or the bad faith of a patient. I knew a rich American divorcée who suffered from a persecution complex. She was convinced that death pursued her; that it circled around her using her as a channel. Her cleaning lady had drowned in the pool; her mother had died in an airplane accident on her way to visit her; a friend of hers committed suicide . . . I advised Pachita that I was going to introduce her to someone possessed. I tried to persuade her to believe, but she was closed in distrust toward the white woman who visits an Indian village. The American arrived at the witch's house in an ambiguous mood. She entered the room with a repugnant, disdainful air. Upon seeing her enter, *El Hermanito*, embodied in Pachita, went red in the face and, expelling foam from the mouth and brandishing the knife with the expression of an assassin, attacked her, determined to kill her. Between the eight of us present, we held the witch, who fought with a force that seemed nearly impossible to subdue. We sang a spell, and after several minutes of complete panic and rage—a crisis bordering on an epileptic fit—*El Hermanito* calmed down. Pachita began to caress the head of the American, who was suddenly very submissive, like a frightened child. "Now I see, my little daughter," murmured *El Hermanito* through Pachita's mouth. "You are possessed by a criminal demon. Without knowing it, you give death. You want to kill. Don't deceive yourself, be sincere and realize that you, because of fear of the world and out of resentment, you are full of a thirst for destruction. If you want to free yourself, you must follow my instructions to the letter." *El Hermanito* ordered her to go to the herb market and buy seven belts of different colors and a piece of coral. For twenty-one days, while sleeping, she should wrap her body with the seven belts and sleep covered like a mummy, with the coral on her chest, like a medallion. For me, the message was clear: she should have slept every night wrapped in the rainbow, symbol of an alliance with God, and purified by the humble beauty of the coral. But the patient did not see it like that. She terminated the consultation, again assumed her old personality, and created every obstacle imaginable in order to not follow the instructions of going to the market. First she broke a toe. Then she suggested she buy the belts in a store in the metropolitan area, because the herb market seemed like a dirty place to her, full of filthy Indians . . . After two or three weeks, I convinced her to go with me to the market. Once we were there, she proved to be absurdly mean; she haggled on the price of the coral and the belts until she was angry over a few pennies. Finally we left the market with the package in her hand, but she almost forgot it in the taxi and didn't show the least interest in taking it with her. That was it! I decided to cut our ties, and I never saw her again. I left her in that world, her world without faith and without love, a victim of herself. Years later, I was informed by the press that she had killed her

lover. Pachita was right: that woman was an assassin. *El Hermanito*, trying to leap on her to kill her, acted as a mirror. The American, moored in her suffering, did not want to change, which was reason enough for her not wanting to benefit from the knowledge transmitted by Pachita, to whom she had gone for a consultation only because I asked her to, although she had no true faith in the power. My point is that it is necessary to collaborate with a sorcerer. *El Hermanito* could not heal someone who did not deeply desire it or who refused to collaborate.

It could be that a person had faith but did not desire to recover their health. I remember, for example, a woman named Henriette, the patient of a doctor friend of ours, who was told she had no more than two years to live. Henriette was sick with cancer, and they had already removed her breasts. At the request of her doctor, who supported trying anything, she traveled with me to Mexico. Although very depressed, she agreed to an operation by Pachita, who suggested purifying her blood by injecting two liters of plasma that arrived from another dimension, made by *El Hermanito*. The day arrived and, after the usual ceremony, Henriette found herself lying on the bed. *El Hermanito* stuck a knife in her arm, and we heard the blood fall into a metal bucket. It was a thick, stinking stream. Then *El Hermanito* introduced into the wound the end of a meter-long plastic tube, lifting the other end into the air to connect it to the invisible. We could hear the sound of liquid pouring smoothly from an unknown place, while *El Hermanito* said, "Receive the holy plasma, little daughter, do not reject it." The day after the operation, not believing in the effects of the "transfusion," Henriette was sad and listless. I tried to get her to respond, but it was impossible. She was smug like a kid, gruff, egotistical. She accused me of wanting to take her to Calvary. Two days later, a huge infected abscess appeared on her arm. Very afraid, I called Enrique, Pachita's son, who, after consulting his mother, told me, "Your friend has faith in medicine, but she rejects it. She wants to undo the holy plasma. So tonight have her do her business in a bedpan, and tomorrow morning apply the excrement to her arm to explode the seat of the infection." I gave the message to Henriette, who closed herself in her room. I do not know if she followed the advice or not, but the truth is that the abscess exploded leaving a very large scar, so deep the bone was visible. Immediately I took her back to Pachita who, converted into *El Hermanito*, said to the patient in a man's voice, "I was waiting for you, daughter. I am going to give you what you desire. Come . . ." The healer took her by the hand like a little girl and brought her to the bed and surprisingly started humming an old French song, while swinging a knife before the open eyes of the patient. I had the impression that she was hypnotizing her. So she asked her, "Why did you want them to cut off your breasts?" To which Henriette answered, in a child's voice, "To not be a mother."

"And now, my dear girl, what do you want them to cut?"

"The glands that swell in my neck."

"Why?"

"To not have to speak to people."

"And then, little daughter?"

"For them to cut the glands that swell under my arm."

"Why?" "To not have to work."

"And then?"

"That they cut those that swell near my sex, so I can be alone with myself."

"And then?"

“The glands in my legs, so that they cannot force me to go anywhere.”

“And then what do you want?”

“To die . . .”

“Very well, my little daughter, now you know the path your illness will take. Choose: follow this path or heal yourself.”

Pachita put a dressing on her arm, and three days later the wound had healed. Henriette decided to go back to Paris, and she died two weeks later. When I told Pachita the sad news, she replied, “*El Hermanito* does not come only to heal. He also helps those who desire it, to die. Cancer and other grave illnesses present themselves like warriors, following a plan of precise conquest. When you show an ill patient, who seeks to wipe himself out, the path the illness takes, he will hurry to follow it. For this reason, the French woman, instead of spending two years suffering, quit fighting. She yielded to the illness and helped it realize its plan in two weeks.” Before this I had believed that it was enough to make someone conscious of self-destructive impulses in order to save them. From this case, I learned the lesson that such knowledge could also accelerate the person’s death.

***Valérie’s testimony is indeed really interesting in that it concerns the relationship between healing and faith, as well as the importance of the desire to live. For your part, what do you think, Alejandro? To heal, is faith necessary?***

Not necessarily. Everything Valérie recounts is rigorously exact, but one cannot draw a generalization from it. Without a doubt, it would be preferable to have faith, but this is not a requirement. Moreover, Pachita appears to know exactly how to shake the skeptics who come to her, as she did by putting the symbol of my film in her hand. One day, I brought her the French stuntman Jean-Pierre Vignau. He was a giant karate champion who did not believe in these things and did not intend to be tricked by an old Mexican woman. He had hurt his leg, and I urged him to go with my wife to Pachita’s house. He was very hesitant, but as I accused him of being afraid, he finally consented while swearing he would not be duped.

***And what was the result of this confrontation between the old sorceress and this stuntman no one messes with?***

It happens that Vignau himself, very touched by the episode, tells of it in *Corps d’acier*, his memoirs published through éditions Robert Laffont in 1984. So I am going to read the related passage. This testimony of a skeptic cannot but add weight to what I have already told you about Pachita:

During that visit to Mexico, to the home of Alejandro, I was to meet the strangest person I had ever met. The strangest and the truest of beings. I had lived with a muscle tear in my thigh for months. Not a little tear either. A huge thing like two closed fists with a hole in the middle. I had searched for weeks in Paris, going from quack doctor to specialist, trying to find someone who could repair this. No luck. They advised me simply to completely quit karate because it was irreparable. One evening, Jodorowsky asked his wife Valérie if she would take me to see Pachita, an old-style Mexican healer. Here, one would call her a sorceress. And like that, one

early morning, I left for Pachita's house with Valérie carrying a raw egg in her hand, something that had to do with the treatment.

We come to a narrow little lane. A big, wooden carriage entrance. Valérie knocks. The door half opens on an old chap to whom Valérie explains the nature of our visit. He lets us in. The courtyard is full of people. Men, women, children, from all social classes but mostly the poor, Indians, mestizos, very typical Mexicans with baskets, snacks, babies strapped to their backs—all that, that discussion, that debate, endless talking. At the heart of the courtyard, on a heap of wood, a little eagle stares at it all with his sharply serene eye.

We wait. After about twenty minutes, a door opens to the house at the end of the courtyard. A little old woman comes out, an old lady. She looks like a lot of the women in the courtyard. Except that she is very small, fat, round, with a white eye, which seems to see better than the other one: to see what the good one can't see anymore. Impossible to guess her age. She could be one hundred or fifty. She is there, in the courtyard; she looks at everyone and chooses a chap, extending a hand to him.

“You . . .” The guy gets up and follows her into the house. A long moment later, he comes out. She again looks about the people gathered there, and she points her finger at me. “You . . .” It is me. I realize that I'm adopting a mental attitude of openness in front of this strange person. I tell myself, “I do not know anyone or anything. So, I open myself. Anyway, she cannot damage my leg anymore than it already is.”

A bit surprised anyway to pass by everyone—but Alejandro explained to me that she thinks men should go ahead of women because men deal less well with suffering; women can wait—so I enter behind her, accompanied by Valérie who explains my case in Spanish.

Suddenly, this little old lady turns toward me and does two or three very quick karate moves while looking at me with her white eye. Right then, I would have said she was twenty years old if someone had asked her age. So she takes the raw egg Valérie brought, breaks it and rubs it all over me, on my face, on my sleeves, on my shirt, on my pants. Then she takes a kind of white liquid in a big bottle behind her and does the same as with the egg. Voilà! Completely whitewashed. She touches my leg on the knots left from the tear. Then she goes back to an altar, like a little nativity scene with figurines and candles, and she begins to pray, to mumble. I listen. I don't understand anything, but I listen. The room is shadowy, only lit by three or four candles; there is an operating table, two or three assistants who are here to learn or to whom she relays the gift, and Pachita, who prays. Then she stops, she moves toward her assistants and dictates a list of products, herbs, plants. They give the list to Valérie for me. I turn toward her.

“What do I have to give her for all that?”

“You give what you want, a peso, two pesos . . .”

I took out by chance the first bill in my pocket, which was I don't know how many pesos, I forget, and we again crossed the courtyard. Then we went out to the big, colorful Mexican market, filled with shouts and agitation, where people bustle about in such a way, one could say, like in Africa, as the heat did not affect them. In this mad market we bought everything we had to. Upon returning to their home, Valérie made a stew with everything, which she put on my thigh as a poultice. I kept it there for three weeks. I lived normally; I trained with it. And at the end of three weeks, she took it off. It was gone! The only pain I felt was when taking off the poultice; it pulled out hairs. My tear had disappeared, completely. And I never had another problem with it. Of course, those who have never lived through something like this could question the veracity of

the minority who have. But Pachita really cured me.

There you have it. The testimony of Jean-Pierre. Interesting, no?

***True. According to you, what must one conclude?***

I will never confirm that Pachita's manipulations were true operations; but I will never confirm the contrary . . . And I concluded that it was not important. It is our belief in an "objective" world, our modern, self-stylized rational mentality that makes this kind of question torment us. We always allege to place ourselves as detached observers of a supposed exterior phenomenon, and so the mechanisms should be clearly defined. In the "shamanic" mentality, to contrast, this kind of problem is not even posed. There is not a subject-observer and an object-observed; there is the world as a dream swarming with signs and symbols, a field of interaction where multiple forces and influences meet. In this context, to know if Pachita's operations are "real" or not proves illogical. What is real? From the time you move into the energetic field of the sorcerer, you incorporate yourself into his reality and he enters into yours; you both move inside the real where the practices of healing are revealed operative. And the fact is that a number of people have been made well and truly healed! In addition, if I return to the said "objective" point of view, I could never describe the "thing" even if I stayed with her week after week, for hours . . . Whatever the case may be, one cannot but recognize Pachita's genius. If it were theater, what an actress! If it has to do with conjuring, this good woman was the greatest illusionist of all time! And what a psychologist . . .

***What did she teach you? What did you keep for your future psycho-magic practice?***

First of all, I learned how to treat people. Thanks to her, I understood that everyone—or almost—is a child, at times an adolescent. Each time someone went to her, she began immediately by touching hands with them, establishing a sensory relationship and putting people in her trust. It produced a strange phenomenon: from feeling this old lady's hands, she appeared like the universal mother, and there was no way to resist her. I testify to this all the more since I was, at the time, extremely rebellious with teachers, and I refused to subject myself to anyone. But with her contact, my resistances melted like snow in the sun. Pachita knew that within every adult, even the most secure, slept a child eager to be loved and that touch would do more than words to immediately establish trust and put the subject in a state of receptivity. This first touch also allowed her to establish a diagnosis. I remember, for example, the day when I brought my French friend to her. He had suffered for some time, and it had taken six months with the French doctors to discover the presence of a polyp in the bowels. Pachita passed her hands over his body and pronounced straightaway the presence of a thickness in the intestines. My friend was astonished!

But in addition to these quasi-divine faculties, this sorceress sometimes performed what appears to me today to be marvelous psycho-magic acts. One day she received a man who was on the verge of suicide because he couldn't bear losing his hair at thirty years of age. He had tried all the treatments possible without success, and he could not allow himself to be seen bald. *El Hermanito* asked him through the mouth of the old lady, "Do you believe in me?" He responded in the affirmative and, in fact, that he had faith in Pachita. So the spirit gave him the following instructions, "Get a kilo of rat excrement. Pee on it. Mix it all together to make a paste that you will apply to your head. This medicine will make your hair grow again." The man vaguely protested, but Pachita insisted, telling

him that if he wanted to avoid baldness, he would have to do it this way. He bowed and decided to submit to the illogical treatment. Three months later, he returned and addressed the old lady, "It was very difficult to find the rat excrement, but I tracked down a laboratory raising white rats. I gave a lab assistant a tip, and he consented to saving the excrement to give me. When I had the kilo, I pissed on it and made the paste, then suddenly realized that it made no difference to me whether or not I had hair. As it turned out, I did not apply the mixture. I decided to be content with my fate."

I saw it as an essential psychomagic act. Pachita asked for a payment he was not really ready to pay. Finding himself there, at the moment of performing the act, he realized that he could perfectly accept his fate. Confronted with the reality of the difficult act that was asked of him, he saw that he preferred to remain bald. He left his world of thoughts, of his imagination, to look the real in the eye. These directives, absurd at first glance, gave him the opportunity to mature; they made it possible to pass through a whole process that resulted in making it possible for him to accept himself as he was.

It is just as I conceived Psychomagic. It was not rare that Pachita lead people on a bizarre walk destined, in the final analysis, to reconcile them with an aspect of themselves. I remember a person who had a big problem with money and was incapable of earning his living. The old lady imposed on him a strange ceremony: The "patient," each night, had to urinate in a chamber pot until it was full. He must then leave the pot under his bed and sleep over his pee-pee for thirty days. As witness to this consultation, I, of course, wondered what could be the significance. Little by little, I began to glimpse the sense of it: If a person does not suffer any particular handicap from the physical or intellectual point of view and cannot earn a living, the truth is that the person does not want to. A part of the person opposes it and comes into conflict with money. Yet, following the directives of Pachita quickly exposes a person to a truer torment: it does not take long for the urine, preserved day after day under the bed, to let out a pestilential odor. Forced to sleep above the pot, the patient becomes saturated in his own stench; he sleeps in the fragrances of his own waste. Such an exercise requires a spirit of sacrifice and develops the will. He must have these in order to bear the nightly get-together with his pee-pee.

***I don't doubt it, Alejandro, but how does this relate to his money problems?***

First, a symbolic relationship: pee is yellow, like gold. But, at the same time, it is waste. Producing waste proceeds from a natural need; the need to urinate or to defecate is a consequence of another need: to eat and to drink. Yet, to sustain these needs, one must earn money. Money, because it is a form of energy, must circulate . . . And that person could not earn a living because he felt a repulsion toward money, considered it dirty and vile . . . The money energy was, in this case, blocked. It was a necessity, but he did not want to be involved in its manipulation. A part of this person refused to take part in the movements of money, its coming and going, its transformation into food or other necessities of life. He was averse to recognizing the legitimate place of "gold" in this web that constitutes all of existence. Pachita forced him to domesticate this fear. Finding himself each night alone with his stagnant pee, the patient subtly understood that nothing becomes "dirty" unless it does not circulate. If one refuses to see it and puts it under the bed, the troubles begin . . . "Gold" stinks only because it was allotted a disgraceful place. Finally, as I have already mentioned, the sole fact of practicing the exercise from the beginning forced him to show will, an indispensable quality for earning a living, normally.

***By the way, Pachita asked her patients to pay her?***

No, she did not ask for fees, but the people made donations. When she operated, there was always a nearby basket with a deep pouch in which the patients deposited what they wanted. One could not accuse her of running a “business.” It happened that those who had the means to pay, paid her well; it was, in effect, an invaluable experience to be healed by this woman. She didn’t heal people to earn money; she earned money because she healed people.

***Let’s go back to your experience and to what this encounter provided, from the viewpoint of Psychomagic.***

I’ve already recounted the operation that I myself underwent. So I won’t go back there. In fact, Pachita deserves a book devoted entirely to her.

Her contribution to Psychomagic is as simple as it is essential: observing her, I discovered that when one goes through the motions of operating, the human body reacts as if it underwent a true operation. If I tell you that I am going to open your stomach to take out a piece of your liver, and I put you on a table and exactly reproduce all the odors and all the maneuverings, if you feel a knife on your skin, if you see blood spurt, if you have the feeling that my hands rummage through your entrails and take something out, you are then “operated on.” The human body accepts directly and naively the symbolic language, in the manner of a child. Pachita knew this and was accomplished in the art of using this vocabulary in an operational—no better way to say it—an operational manner.

***So, to you, she was above all an expert in symbolic communication?***

Absolutely. She was, moreover, very attentive to objects, to the jewelry a person wore, for example. I remember a woman wearing an oval bracelet. On the inside of it, in a little hole, also oval-shaped, a watch was inset. It was evidentially a gift from her mother, and Pachita quickly saw that this woman would not settle her problems as long as she was not disengaged from the influence of her mama. It’s important to note that the hole symbolized the mother; in the sense that it was still the mother that made the daughter-watch tick . . . Pachita instinctively deciphered the symbolic message and recommended a complete ritual to get rid of the object. For her, nothing was innocent; the world was truly a forest of symbols in constant interaction. It is through this contact that I was opened to the language of objects, to the significance that they take on. For example, the gift: anything given has an essence, registered in the dynamics of possession and communication. In the same way, leaving something behind at a friend’s house or in a public place is not an accident. Primitive sorcery knows the mechanism of these interactions and has more or less mastered them. But, of course, it has to do with an intuitive wisdom, not an intellectual or a scientific one. The sorcerer or shaman would probably be incapable of having an elaborate discussion on his own practice; for that, it would be necessary to be positioned on the outside, to watch oneself acting and decipher one’s own performance.

The sorcerer or shaman is not the unconscious “objective” spectator but an integral part of the subjective universe in which everything is alive. Pachita, too, saw ailments as animated beings: the tumor was an evil creature that deserved to be burned alive—and right away you hear birds chirping. At times, she removed from a sick body a moving shape that seemed to fidget like a marionette in the half-light. She materialized the sickness, which thus lost its status as an invisible enemy—which had

made it seem all the more menacing—to embody a vaguely grotesque figure that deserved to die. From the stomach of a homosexual patient, a black phallus blowing like a toad was removed.

***Worthy of your happenings! They are “panic” scenes that you describe.***

Worthy of Goya! I do not know how she succeeded in leading us to that baroque world . . . Trance, collective hallucination, brilliant conjuring? Anyway, if there was a trap, it was a sacred trap. I want to say that her magic acts proved effective. She actually relieved the majority of those who came to her. That is why I wanted to observe her and learn from her.

***You position yourself, though, somewhat differently; unlike Castaneda, who, having received the teachings from Don Juan, became himself a shaman, you do not claim to be a sorcerer. You content yourself in assimilating fixed universal principles, making them not magic but “Psychomagic.”***

Yes, for I am not, in the end, from a culture called “primitive.” In my opinion, with few exceptions—and I do not give an opinion in the case of Castaneda, whom I met in Mexico during this time—one cannot become a shaman or sorcerer if one is not born into a primitive context. Even with the strongest will and the biggest opportunity in the world, one does not disconnect so easily from all of the rational mainstream baggage.

***Castaneda is an elusive character whom few can boast of having seen. Under what circumstances did you meet him?***

At that time, in the seventies, I was well known in certain circles, thanks to the film *El Topo*, which, to many, was an example of film magic. Castaneda had seen it twice and liked it. I found myself in Mexico in a restaurant at which they serve a splendid steak and good wine. Castaneda was there in the company of a Mexican actress whom he had met in the dive of a lady friend who was also there with a man. Castaneda—for it couldn't have been anyone else—upon learning who I was, sent his friend to our table. The woman asked me if I wanted to meet Castaneda. “Of course,” I replied, “I am a great admirer of his!” She said that he would come sit at my table, but I insisted on going to his.

***A fantastic coincidence . . .***

Life is fantastic! I proposed to Castaneda that we go to his hotel, but he wanted to come to mine. We were like two Chinese, competing in politeness. He did not cease to give me preference, and I did the same, of course.

***And you didn't wonder if in fact you really were in the presence of Castaneda?***

Not for an instant. Later, in the United States, he published a book in which a portrait appears, a drawing. And it is the portrait of the man I met.

***What was your first impression?***

In Mexico, it is easy to determine the social class to which a man belongs simply by looking at him physically. Castaneda has the appearance of a truck driver.

***What!***

Yes, he looks like any other man on the street. He is not fat, but very stocky, with curly hair and a nose slightly flattened: a Mexican of the popular class. But, as soon as he opens his mouth, he is transformed into a prince; behind each of his words one senses a huge culture.

***It gives the impression of wisdom?***

More than wisdom, of friendliness. Quickly we became friends. He dressed simply and was having a nice fillet, washed down with a Beaujolais . . . It seemed like it wasn't Don Juan but rather Castaneda who was featured in the books. I found myself caught up again in his tone, his voice, that was how it seemed . . .

***In your opinion do his books narrate real stories or fiction?***

It is difficult to say. My impression is that they are based on a real experience except for the parts that elaborate and introduce concepts extracted from universal esoteric literature. In his books you find Zen, the Upanishads, the tarots, work with dreams . . . One thing is for sure: he went all over Mexico in order to do his investigations.

***Do you believe in the existence of Don Juan?***

No. I believe that this character is a genius invention of Castaneda, who, of course, has met a number of Yaqui witches.

***How did the conversation in the hotel room develop?***

In the first place, he called to tell me he would arrive five minutes early. Such gentlemanliness affected me. Then, when he arrived, I said, "I don't know if you are a madman, a genius, a swindler, or if you tell the truth." He assured me that he said only the truth, and immediately afterwards he told me an incredible story, of how Don Juan, with a simple slap on the back, projected him forty kilometers away—because he had been distracted by a woman who passed by. He also talked to me about the sex life of Don Juan, who was capable of ejaculating fifteen times in a row. On the other hand, it appeared to me that Castaneda himself liked women a lot. He asked me if we might make a movie together. Hollywood had offered him a lot of money, but he didn't want Don Juan to be Anthony Quinn . . . Then he began to have diarrhea, with a lot of pain in his stomach, something that, he said, never happened to him, ever. I also had strong pains in the liver and in the right leg. It was strange that those pains came when we started to make plans for a joint project. The pain made us crawl about the room. I called a taxi and accompanied him to his hotel. Then I went to have Pachita operate on me. I had insisted that Castaneda go meet that exceptional woman, but he did not appear. I had to stay in bed for three days. Once recovered, I called the hotel, but he had left. I did not ever see him again: Life separated us. A warrior doesn't leave footprints.

***That is to say, he seemed to be at the same time a con and a very interesting person . . .***

He told me his stories of Don Juan with such conviction . . . I am accustomed to the theater, to actors, and he did not seem to be a liar. Maybe he's both crazy and a genius?

***In your opinion, what has been Castaneda's contribution?***

His contribution has been immense. He created a fountain of different knowledge, a South American fountain. He revived the concept of the spiritual warrior. He put into motion the present notion of waking dreams. Without a doubt, he published too much, but the American publishers made him sign contracts for hundreds of books. And he always, in spite of everything, had something new to say. His books reveal a lot of forgotten things. In this regard truth or fantasy is of little importance. If it is a trap, it is a sacred trap.

***As a Chilean with Russian roots, having lived a long time in Mexico, you are truly not the prototype of the western worshiper of the Goddess Reason.***

It is true. I am relatively crazy, as you know.

***Oh, yes . . . (sigh)***

But my madness, my excesses, remain rooted in a culture that is nevertheless very modern. Like it or not, I am the product of a materialistic society, which claims to maintain an "objective" rapport with the world. My most extreme boldness is always placed within this context; we can't get away from that. I exaggerate, maybe, to emphasize the contradictions and the dead ends, but that doesn't make it false. To be a sorcerer or a shaman is to live in a shamanic world. For my own part, I do not believe enough in primitive magic for me myself to become a magician.

That is why, while I wanted to learn from Pachita, I never envisioned receiving her gift in order to take my turn to become a healer. I would even say that I always refused.

***Without a doubt, you don't believe enough in magic to become a magician; but you believe all the same . . .***

The fact is that I can't say what is truth and what is fantasy. But I quickly realized that to learn from Pachita, it was necessary to adopt a clear stance and to act as if I absolutely didn't believe at all.

***Why?***

If I had come from the principle that all this could be true, that magic as such could be a reality, I would very quickly have found myself at a dead end. I would have endeavored to follow her magic trail, to become myself a magician, and I would have achieved only partial or mediocre results because one cannot become a shaman by saying, "All this *could be true*." So I forced myself to act as if this could not be anything but false. By "false," I do not want to say nonexistent—one was well obliged to acknowledge the healing and the strange phenomena that arose around Pachita—but better

if it could be explained by an ensemble of psycho-physiological laws. I thus found myself able to truly learn from this woman something that I could then reuse in my context.

*To . . .*

To know the way to use the language of objects and the symbolic vocabulary in order to produce certain affects in people; basically, how specifically to direct the unconscious in its own language, be that by words, by objects, by acts. That's what I learned from Pachita!

***Pachita was truly exceptional, but she was part of a tradition.***

Of course, and that is why, after having met her, I concerned myself with the function of magic in all primitive cultures. I read hundreds of books on the subject to try to glean some universal elements that I could use in a conscious way in my own practice. I do not want to belabor this, but I want to give you some examples. All cultures have an idea of the power of the word, the conviction that desire expressed in a healthy way leads to fulfillment. But often, the name of God or the spirit is reinforced by its association to an image. The ancients knew intuitively that the unconscious is receptive not only to the oral language but also to shapes, images, and objects. In addition, the Egyptians accorded a capital importance to the written word. It was more about what was written than about what was said. In Psychomagic, I often ask people to draft letters, not so much for where the letters go or what they say as for the mere act of writing and of instilling these missives with therapeutic virtues. Another universal practice is that of purification, ablution rituals. In Babylon, during the healing ceremonies, the exorcists enjoined the patient to undress, to throw all their old clothes away (symbolic of the old me), and to dress anew. The Egyptians considered purification a prerequisite to the reciting of magic formulas, as is witnessed in ancient texts. I've forgotten the exact source, but this greatly inspired me: "If a man recites this formula for his own use, he must be coated in oil and ointment, the censer in the hand and filled with burning incenses; he must have a good quality natron in the mouth; he must be dressed in new clothing, after washing in flowing waters, to be wearing white sandals, and to have painted the image of Ma'at in fresh india ink on the tongue." According to this, it is not unusual that I ask those who come for a consultation to take a bath, to have an enema, because I know that this act, in innocent appearance, greatly influences their psychology; it puts them in a different disposition. If someone dreads going to see his mother, I suggest rinsing the mouth seven times before the meeting and filling pockets with lavender. These details suffice to make them approach the meeting in a different way.

The ancients also attributed a role of the ally to a number of symbolic objects: the magic texts were recited over an insect, a small animal, or even a collar. Also bands of flax, wax figurines, feathers, or hair were used . . . Finding in the texts traces of these practices, I gave myself up to reflecting on the projections people make onto objects, and I asked myself how to use this in a positive way. Magicians would engrave the names of their enemies on vases, which then were shattered and buried, causing similar destructions and disappearances for their adversaries. The portraits of the "bad guys" were painted on the soles of royal sandals, so the king trampled the potential invaders every day. In Psychomagic, I have often resorted to the same "primitive" principles—but exclusively to a positive end. I advise people to "bring evidence against" an object, to assign it a name . . . Along the same line, from the Hittite sorcerers, I learned the concepts of substitution, replacement, and identification: the magician, in effect, does not shatter evil by finding its origins, but rather ends it, eradicating it

from the victim's body or spirit and sending it to hell. Based on an old text, "an object will be attached to the right hand and foot of the officiant, then withdrawn and attached secondly to a mouse, while the officiant says: 'I remove the evil and I attach it to this mouse'; and then frees the mouse." In the same way, Pachita removed the evil by attaching it to a plant, a tree, or a cactus, which had the effect of making the plant die before our very eyes. It is also possible to replace the victim with a lamb or a goat: it is the old concept of sacrifice by substitution where the animal takes the place of the patient. One ties a turban on the head of a goat and then slits its throat with a knife that has previously been put to the throat of the suffering patient . . . According to Jewish magic, an evil force can be a mistaken hoax, induced by error. To do this, one disguises himself as the person on whom he wishes to vent his anger, changes his name . . . I have myself had the occasion to verify how to change a name, even a handwritten one could prove effective. I also apply this principle to a tarot card: as a rule, the Tower reflects a catastrophe; but why not call it the "Soul and Its God" and, in this way, change it positively? All of these old rituals taught me to use burial as an act of purification.

These are only a few examples of the universal principles of magic acts that I use in Psychomagic, in other words: in therapeutic actions.

# FIVE



## THE PSYCHOMAGIC ACT

*After the magic act, we come to the psychomagic act. In the context of magic that surrounds a sorceress like Pachita, faith plays an essential role. Yet you said earlier that faith is not a prerequisite.*

Then, rather than speak of “faith,” let’s use the word “obedience.” I would like simply to say that even if one does not believe in the power of the sorcerer, it is appropriate to remain impartial and to leave an opening for the sorcery to work. Otherwise stated, faith or not, a patient must show enough integrity to follow to the letter the instructions received. If you consult a doctor and, once gone from her office, you do not put the least effort to buying the prescribed medicines, how can you then evaluate the effectiveness of the treatment? If Pachita prescribes whatever act, the person believes it and completes it without seeking to understand. Obedience, that’s all, because of the mysteries that the suggested practice can encompass. As we have already emphasized, all this is part of a culture radically different from ours. The editor of an important Parisian monthly magazine got cancer and asked me if I could introduce him to Pachita. So I brought him to her house; she operated on him and said, “You are healed, but be careful: let six months pass before telling anyone!” He did not obey. As soon as he was back in France, he had exams by a battery of doctors in the hope of confirming the sorceress’s verdict. They told him that he was not healed, and he died three months later. On the other hand, one of my French friends, a reporter for a big film syndicate, already the victim of several heart attacks, under my insistence, was brought to Pachita’s house so that she could “change” his heart. The operation complete, the sorceress asked him to wait three months to tell. After this time had passed, he submitted to exams and an EKG to reveal great improvements. Years have passed, and he is still alive to this day. I can also cite the case of the assistant to the director François Reichenbach. Following a traffic accident, she seemed condemned to be paralyzed. Pachita operated on her, and she began to walk. Some time has passed, and she even has come to thank me for having introduced her to the sorceress. I profited from the occasion to ask her to testify at a conference I gave at the Sorbonne before an audience of about five hundred people. Let me read to you a part of her testimony, as it was recorded and then transcribed:

**Jodorowsky:** I’m going to interview you. What’s your name?

**Claudie:** Claudie.

**J:** You were the assistant to which French filmmaker?

**C:** I was Reichenbach’s assistant.

**J:** You had an accident?

**C:** Yes, in Belize. My vertebral column was smashed, nerves split in my back and nine vertebrae broken. I was in a coma for three months. When I came out of it, they told me I was paralyzed and would never walk again. So Reichenbach called me and said, "I am with Alejandro Jodorowsky. He wants to speak with you." For me, Jodorowsky was, at the time, someone who had made a completely crazy film. He asked me, "What's wrong?" and I told him, "I am paralyzed." He told me this was not serious. "You must go to Mexico to see the sorceress Pachita." So I went to be operated on without believing any of it. I did not believe in the knife; I did not believe anything at all. She did something that hurt like hell. It was very, very painful. She cut me open from the neck to the coccyx. I had given her a hundred bucks to buy vertebrae.

**J:** Yes. She buys the vertebrae from the hospital or the morgue, I don't know . . . At times, she brings a heart in a flask . . .

**C:** So that was that! But I must tell you one thing: I was sure that one day I would get up and walk. I did not believe in Pachita; I took Alejandro for a madman. But, at least, I was sure of walking again, and I achieved that. Before anything else, I believe in myself.

**J:** Tells us about your operation!

**C:** Well, she opened up all of my spine with a knife. I very well felt that. Then I felt her tapping like with a hammer. Then, she returned to me . . . Ah no, she first held a bottle of alcohol over me at ninety degrees. There was a revolting odor of hot blood. The alcohol burned me terribly. An arm passed in front of me, and I didn't miss the chance. I bit it. Yes, I bit it! At that moment, I fainted. That was not really because of the pain but because of the smell of blood that I couldn't bear. She turned me over. I asked myself, "But what is she doing?" and I did not see her hands anymore. They were gone. She was inside my stomach, and I didn't feel anything.

**J:** That is what you saw . . .

**C:** That is what I saw.

**J:** There you go! Sometimes, it is like a transfer, my friends. I do not know if you saw a program on Aikido [a Japanese martial art used as a personal defense; it consists of using the attacker's own energy to defeat him]. The master arrives and, with the *Ki*, he is nearly invincible. This is not because against another who is not his own student he cannot do anything. A transfer is necessary. That is to say, we transfer to certain archetypal strengths what we carry inside us, and because we operate this transfer, we make this person a master, a guru, someone who has immense power. He is invisible. It is our transfer. It is completely useful and necessary, but it is a transfer. With Pachita, what is curious is that everyone who comes to see her makes such a transfer.

**Interesting . . . Claudie did not believe, but she allowed it, unlike the magazine editor who let it go to his head.**

Yes. For the practice to work, it was necessary, above all, to participate in the game without seeking to understand. For my part, however, I tried hard to take hold of some of the mechanisms at work in the process of healing and to be able to use them later. I remember, for example, one of my friends who felt extremely weak. Pachita told him to stop taking vitamins. She ordered him to go to the butcher, to steal a piece of meat and eat it. He should perform this ritual once a week. Of course, he recovered all of his energy, in my opinion, for one very simple reason: commitment to a weekly crime

was for this poor timid man an act of unheard of audacity. He had to mobilize all of his energy. He discovered himself stronger and decided to believe it, and his life changed from the instant that he developed another perception of himself. This, at least, is how I explain it.

***Between capturing certain subtle psychological mechanisms at work in the sorcery practiced by Pachita and prescribing psychomagic acts there is a big gap. How did you cross it? How did you go from reflecting on a magic act to the practice of Psychomagic?***

As you know, I studied the tarot a lot, and I enjoyed a certain reputation as a tarologist. Author of comic books, filmmaker, and stage director, I never looked to earn my living through the cards; however, I wanted to, at one time, study the tarot further. For that, it was necessary to communicate with others, to practice giving readings. So I went to rue des Lombards to the bookstore called Arcane 22 that specializes in the tarot. Because the owners respected me, I suggested that they outfit a little room in the rear of the boutique and hire me to receive two people per day for six months to give professional readings. They posted an ad, and clients came. I am not going to exaggerate my idea of the tarot. Suffice it to say, I do not read the future but I content myself with the present and focus the client on self-knowledge, starting from the principle that it is useless to know the future if one ignores who one is here in the moment. In short, I gave these consultations, which aroused in me certain thoughts. The more I advance, the more I notice that all problems stem from the genealogy tree.

***What do you mean to say by that?***

To enter into a person's difficulties is to enter into his family, to penetrate the psychological atmosphere of his domestic milieu. We are all marked, not to say contaminated, by the psychomental universe of our people. A number of people have associated with them a personality that is not theirs, one that is borrowed from one or more members of their emotional environment. To be born into a family is to be, if I may say it this way, possessed.

This possession is transmitted from generation to generation: the enchanted becomes the enchanter in projecting onto his children what was projected onto him—unless an awakening comes to break the cycle. At the end of their two-hour consultation, a number of people exclaimed, “I have not discovered so much in two years of analysis!” So I was happy with myself, convinced that only an awakening sufficed to eradicate problems. Yet that was not true. To undo a difficulty, it is not sufficient to clearly identify the problem. An awakening that is not followed by some action serves nothing. From that, little by little, I glimpsed that I had to advise people. And yet, I refused. What right had I to intrude into people's lives, to try to influence their behavior? I did not want to become a sorcerer myself! It was a difficult position, because the people who came to see me asked for that: I would have had to become their father, their mother, their husband, their spouse . . . But I was not disposed to become a director of consciousness, to interfere in anyone's existence. So, something was imposed on me: for the awakening to become operable, I must make the person act, lead them to commit a very precise act, but I must do so without taking charge or assuming the role of guide regarding their life. Thus, the birth of the psychomagic act in which I joined together all that I had absorbed over the years and all that I had talked about in interviews.

***How did you proceed?***

First of all, I would thoroughly study the person, compel him to tell me absolutely everything. Instead of trying to divine, by way of the tarot, what could be well hidden, I subjected him to a very simple interrogation. I would question my clients about birth, parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, sexual life, relationship with money, emotional life, intellectual life, health . . .

### ***A true confession.***

Absolutely, and I quickly became a record holder of dreadful secrets! Thefts, rapes, incest . . . A man confessed a childhood secret: At the end of one school year, he waited for a hated teacher, planning to throw a big rock at his head from the top of a wall. Maybe the teacher died, but the boy didn't stick around to find out . . . One day, I received the father of a Belgian family, and I immediately guessed him to be homosexual. "Yes, I confess, and I have sexual relations with ten people a day at the saunas, every time I come to Paris. And do you know what my problem is? I would like to be able to do it with fourteen, like my friend." The skeletons began to come out of the closets. I gathered up the blackest, most extravagant secrets. Incest erupted: a woman confessed to me that the father of her daughter was no other than her own father; a boy seduced by his mother told me everything . . . Sadomasochism, homosexual fixations, masturbation . . . Everything has happened! People were free to tell all because they trusted me, and they judged me capable of proposing a therapy adapted to their cultural and social heritage.

### ***Why do you have to receive such a detailed confession?***

Because, before taking on whatever the problem may be, it is most important to know the situation. This principle I learned from the author of *The Book of Five Rings*, Miyamoto Musachi. He says that before combat, one must surrender very early to the situation and acquire a perfect knowledge of it. Certain doctors also apply this method. A familiarization with a person's psycho-emotional state appears to me to be a prerequisite for the prescription of a psychomagic act.

### ***How does the tarot play in all of this? If a person confesses, you don't need to guess at anything.***

People usually make only partial confessions. They guard the best, if I dare say, for later. The tarot helps me to expose certain shameful secrets right off the bat. Then, working with all the elements, I'm ready to recommend an irrational and, at the same time, rational act: irrational in its appearance but rational in that the person knows why it has to be done. On the other hand, all psychomagic acts have perverse, that is to say, uncontrollable, effects—which are precisely what gives Psychomagic its richness.

### ***Please explain.***

I'm going to give you an example. One day I received a visit from a Swiss woman whose father had died in Peru when she was eight years old. Her mother had erased all traces of this man, burning his photos and letters. So my client had remained emotionally eight years old. In her forties, she still talked like a little girl and had big problems. I prescribed an act to her: she must go to Peru to the places where her father had lived and bring back something, a souvenir, a palpable trace of his existence. Upon returning to Europe, she had to place whatever mementos she brought back in her

room, light a candle, then go to her mother's home and slap her across the face. Specifically because her mother had always mistreated her and poured insults on her. As you will see, accomplishing the act required a real commitment. She went to Peru and found the boarding house where her father had lived and, by one of those synchronicities which reveal what I call "Reality Dance," found letters and photos. Her father had entrusted them to the owner of the boarding house in the hope that his daughter would come one day to take possession of them. My patient found, several decades later, the mementos he had left, and thanks to them, she was able to "resurrect" her father. Reading these letters and looking at the photographs, she stopped seeing her father as a ghost and ended up feeling that he had been a flesh and blood being. Upon returning to her home, she placed the letters and photos in her room, lit the candle, and went to see her mother with the intention of really smacking her. Mother and daughter ordinarily had a very difficult relationship. Yet my patient was surprised to discover that her mother—to whom she had announced her visit—was waiting for her and, for the first time, had prepared a meal. Stupefied to see her being so nice, she was embarrassed at the idea of slapping her, especially since her mother gave her no cause. But the psychomagic act supposes a closed contract that she had to respect. So, at the moment of dessert, she smacked her mother by surprise and for no apparent reason, already anticipating a furious reaction because she had always felt terrorized by her mother. So, the mother contented herself to simply ask, "But why did you do that?" Before such an opening, the daughter finally found the words and could express all the grief that she held toward her. Do you know what the mother concluded? "You smacked me," she said, "and, as well, you should owe me another." Through this act, a friendship finally formed between these two women.

### ***Like a miracle.***

I can give you the name and address of the person if you want to verify the story. I told you this to show how the act follows its own logic. One does not foresee how it is going to unwind nor what the effects are going to be. But it is prescribed on the basis of a good knowledge of the situation. The result, whatever it may be, cannot be anything but positive.

### ***You then went from tarot readings to prescribing psychomagic acts.***

I quickly had to face a big demand: people who came to consult me as a tarologist, those who had followed my massage training, and those who attended my weekly conferences at the Mystical Cabaret—it was mad. So I adopted three formulas for work: individually, in groups of thirty or forty, and in the framework of the Mystical Cabaret, where there are between four and five hundred. The essential procedure, however, does not vary: someone explains a problem to me, and I prescribe an act. But it was in private interviews that the majority of acts were prescribed.

### ***In prescribing an act, you make a contract with the person . . .***

Yes. And this mutual agreement is very important. First of all, the person promises to complete the act in the exact way that I prescribe it, without changing one iota. To avoid any misunderstandings and due to the betrayal of the memory, the person must immediately write down the act and the procedure to follow. Once the act is accomplished, she must send me a letter in which, first, she transcribes the instructions received from me; second, she tells me in detail how she applied them, the circumstances, and the adventures that arose during the process; third, she describes to me the results.

The sending of this letter constitutes my only fee for prescribing the act.

***Then you do not receive money as a psychomagician?***

I have always held that the acts be prescribed for free, at least from the strictly financial point of view, the writing and sending of the letter being a form of payment. In making the effort to write to me at length, the person pays the price that I receive.

***How do your clients react when faced with these demands?***

There are, of course, so many different reactions from my clients, but it is possible to distinguish certain types of attitudes: there are people who take a year to send the letter; others who do not want to do exactly what I tell them and haggle . . . They find all kinds of excuses to not follow the instructions to a tee. Yet, if the prescription is changed in any way, the necessary conditions for the success of the act are not respected, and the effects can even prove to be negative. It must be said that to speak in such a direct way to the unconscious amounts to, in some way, exerting on it a kind of pressure: one seeks to make it obey. Now, we only have the problems we really want to have. We are attached to our difficulties. Nothing comes as a surprise. So, those who pussyfoot around and arrange to sabotage the act do not truly want to cure themselves. To get out of my difficulties implies that I deeply modify my relationship with myself and with all of my past. Under these conditions, who is truly ready to change? People really want to cease suffering but they are not ready to pay the price, that is to say, to mutate, to no longer define themselves by their precious suffering. As to my advice, the less I accept the haggling, the more I render a service to others. It is up to my client to position herself to accept or refuse my conditions.

***That your yes be yes, that your no be no . . .***

Exactly!

***One knows that the psychotherapist authorizes himself to see patients. What happens with the psychomagician? How are you authorized to prescribe acts that address the unconscious?***

I am going to give you an irrational response: in the moment when I prescribe the act, if I don't doubt it, I am justified.

***That you feel justified I don't doubt, but how can you be so sure of it? At the end of the day, there is a lot at stake.***

In this regard, there is, in fact, but one and only one question to ask: who prescribes the act? I have worked so much to disidentify myself from my "I," that in dispensing psychomagic advice, it is not I who speaks, but my unconscious.

***Everyone is like that! We all react, just like marionettes lead by unconscious drives.***

True, but in the case of the person acting automatically, there is not any disidentification. I do not

claim to have reached wisdom, because I am not disidentified twenty-four hours a day; but while I'm prescribing an act, that is, playing my role as psychomagician, I find myself in a trance or in autohypnosis—whatever you wish to call it—this is no longer my little “I” who speaks. I feel that what has to be said is raised from the depths. I feel that I have worked enough with myself to be capable of this timely disidentification. Of course, we move in a subtle and subjective domain, one that no longer has any relationship to reason but only to faith. A saint knows that he does well; deep within himself, he knows it authentically, and he is led by a positive force—even if some people criticize him or see something harmful in him. Each time I give psycho-magic advice, I am convinced that it is the appropriate response to the person's problem. It is only in the second phase that I lay it open and explain it in a rational manner. The advice rises from just one stroke of my unconscious in direct contact with the unconscious of the client.

***This aptitude of speaking from the depth is not given to everyone.***

In my case, it is the fruit of the work of my whole life! I spent a good part of my existence meditating and studying traditional teachings to, little by little, find in myself an impersonal space. I'm not speaking of saintliness but rather of impersonality, of a state situated beyond or below my little “me.” So that it is not Alejandro but the nonperson in me who prescribes the appropriate act. I feel myself, then, animated by a totally positive and disinterested feeling. It is the nature of the “psychomagician” that I look to do only good. Of my patients, I do not ask for their money but their effort. The will to change constitutes my compensation, and that is why Psychomagic has not become an industry. Believe me, it would have been easy to live abundantly from my consultations, so strong was the demand. People are more ready to pay, to take out their wallet, than to give a little bit of themselves. My living came through cinema and comic books; I prefer, for my services as psychomagician, that my clients remunerate me other than in dollars.

***Isn't this activity gratifying? At least, you feel recognized.***

I do not use Psychomagic to become recognized!

***In that case, why have you hoped for a publication of the consecrated book in this discipline?***

My motivation in this respect is something else. Though I write books and screenplays or comics, I do not feel that I must, myself, compose a draft for Psychomagic. On the contrary, it would be too bad if this method disappeared after my death—that no trace would remain. It seems to me that the time has come to put this to paper and to disseminate it a bit further. More and more people talk about Pachita; they write, with more or less talent and sensibility, books and relevant articles, inspired by me, by these energies with which I find myself directly in contact. Also, I feel I need to tell how I went from the poetic act, the theatrical act, the oneiric act, and the magic act to Psychomagic—in the first place, to give testimony to a certain approach focused on reality which results from the practice of Psychomagic, and second, to give interested people some bearing, a text to reference. After all, it was you who came to find me for *La Trampa Sagrada!* I never asked.

***I agree.***

I told myself then that you, as a writer and a friend, could give form to this knowledge to which I am only a servant. I insist then on this dimension of service. Oh, I know, it sometimes happens that I am unbearable: I am a mystical clown, a surrealist of spirituality, a panic provocateur . . . But I have truly, sincerely worked on myself. You may think me an exuberant charlatan, but I am nothing less than an honest man, a creator touched by the suffering of beings who wanted, all of their lives, to serve the beauty that frees them. Psychomagic is part of the best I have in me. What I aspire to, in all honesty, is sharing—for my good and for the good of others. If this book brings a degree of recognition, that is extremely good, but that is not my business. It is truly in a spirit of service that I conceive this book with you.

***Briefly, Psychomagic is a purely spiritual approach . . .***

Exactly. I concentrate on action—on relieving suffering by prescribing an act—without worrying about the fruits that I could personally harvest. Because of this, Psychomagic could not be relegated to a medical or paramedical approach. It rests before everything on detachment from the practical.

***Will it always be possible to remain detached? A number of therapists fall into the trap. When they earn their living by their practice, material necessity makes them take on more and more patients nonselectively.***

Even if demand forces me to make Psychomagic a professional practice, I will never find myself financially dependent on it, for the good and simple reason that comic books and cinema suffice for me to live well. And yet, I do not have any intention of abandoning the artistic creation. From the material point of view, detachment comes from knowing that I can stop at any time and not find myself without resources.

***Can you clarify what you understand as “detachment,” not only from the material point of view but in respect to the practice of Psychomagic itself?***

To be able to help a person, it is necessary to never expect anything of him and to penetrate all aspects of his privacy without getting personally involved. I will give you an example. A participant in one of my massage courses could not bear to have someone touch her chest. As soon as a man, even a man whom she desired, pretended to brush her breasts, she would start screaming. This caused a lot of suffering, and she wished deeply to be free of this irrational panic. I proposed that she take off her shirt. This she accepted, revealing beautiful breasts, which were not monstrous or unusual. I asked her, “Do you trust me?”

“Yes,” she responded.

“I would like to touch you in a particular way, which is unlike both the touch of a desirous man playing with your body and the cold medical examination. I would like to touch you with my spirit. Do you think I could touch you, establish an intimate contact with you which is not sexual at all?”

“Maybe . . .”

I then put my hands three meters from her breasts and spoke to her softly, “Look at my hands. I am going to approach you slowly, millimeter by millimeter. As soon as you feel attacked or bothered, tell

me to stop, and I will not advance any farther.”

Then I very slowly moved my hands closer to her. I found myself ten centimeters from her breasts when she asked me to stop. So I obeyed. Then, after a long moment, I got really close to the painful zone. Slowly, very slowly, I again began to move my hands toward her, very much listening to what was happening with her. Reassured by the quality of the attention I showed her, feeling that I operated very kindly, she did not emit the least protestation. In the end, my hands were on her chest, to her amazement, without her feeling any pain.

Why I have I told this story? Because this example shows the kind of “detachment” that is, I believe, indispensable to anyone who truly wishes to help others. I could touch, feel the breasts of this woman by being something other than my sexual “I,” without thinking for one second of taking pleasure from this touch. In fact, it was with my soul that I touched her. At that moment, I was no longer a man but an entity. It is necessary to be able to touch the body of another in order to contact the spirit, without this proximity awakening unresolved issues in ourselves. I cited you the case of a pretty woman but, without a doubt, I should make clear that I have touched all sorts of people, old, young, beautiful, ugly, at times deformed or sick . . . What is important is to position oneself in an inner state that excludes all temptation to profit from the other or to abuse the power that one has over the other. Because, at the end of the day, whether through tarot, massage, or Psychomagic, nothing acquires sense but by a unique force, a detached energy that, at times, stirs a human being to help another human being. It has to do with a pure energy, very pure, very simple, and very subtle. In the instant that personal will, desire, or fear comes into play, the relationship of help loses its justification and becomes a masquerade. I do not say that, in me, these manifestations of the ego can’t surge when I act, but if I recognize them immediately for what they are and I let them pass as thoughts, pass as in Zen meditation, then they can fade straightaway without influencing the relationship with the person who gave me an opportunity to help. I am very conscious of the necessity for inner purification, ritual ablutions that have been preconceived well enough by tradition and that release not only attachments of the body but, above all, those of the heart and the soul. Looking at it another way, what good does it do to beat my head against the wall if I am not purified, sufficiently transparent? I remember a Zen story along this line: Walking in snowy country, the disciple asked the master, “Master, the sidewalks are white; when will they lose this color?” The master did not respond right away. He concentrated in his *hara*, and then said, in a harsh voice, “When the sidewalks are white, they are white; when they are not white, they are not white!” What a great response! The essential is to accept oneself. If my present condition bothers me, that’s a sign for me to correct it. So, more or less consciously, I try to be distinct from what I am; in short, I am not me. If, on the other hand, I accept my state at the moment, I am at peace. I do not whine under the pretext that I must be more of a saint, more beautiful, more pure than I am—here in this moment. When I am white, I am white; when I am obscure, I am obscure. That’s it! That does not prevent me from working on me, to seek to become a better instrument; this acceptance of myself does not limit my aspirations but rather sustains them. Because one can only advance from where one truly is.

***This, you say, carries the possible risk of misrepresentation: if I understand you, only a person who has already worked a lot on his own problems can give psychomagic advice. I would go as far as to say that this approach is yours alone, the fruit of your very specific journey, and it appears difficult for others to apply it. Perhaps, some could be inspired by it, but no one could know how to play it the way you do. Yet, we know well enough that you have been a role model.***

***Your nights of Mystical Cabaret attract a range of people, some of whom believe themselves more advanced than they really are and use your lessons for their own benefit.***

Alas, this is true. I will cite but one example of this kind of attitude. After hearing me talk a bit about Psychomagic, a guy quickly authorized himself to practice it. He organized a stage and, with a lot of confidence, prescribed some women to do the same act: each must buy a big pair of scissors and send it as a gift to her mother! What a catastrophe! Actually, there is much more advice than there are people, and it would not be possible to prescribe acts en masse. The psychomagic supermarket is an aberration. Each act is “tailor-made,” based on listening deeply and, as I have already explained, on a spontaneous contact with the unconscious, which is the only way to render this specific disidentification possible—only as the fruit of long spiritual work. To prescribe the same act to a group, without really listening and without true love, seems criminal to me. One can image the reaction of the mothers receiving the scissors by mail . . . That can only have a negative effect. When I prescribe a seemingly aggressive act, I only do it having the certitude that the consequences will be positive. It is always about an essentially creative act. This man, on the contrary, has exercised a destructive influence.

The same individual asked his victims to identify themselves with a doll, to transfer to them all of their pain, then deposit them at his house in a big bag. One of these women soon came to me in a panic, prey to psychosis, persuaded that the man held a power over her . . . Besides, he could not even reassure her by returning the doll because, once the people left, he threw them all in the garbage. Briefly, he is a retailer who makes money by exploiting my work and the credulity of some women. So I take advantage of our dialogue to denounce publicly all those who claim to practice Psychomagic.

***It is a serious pitfall. How can these kinds of corruptions be avoided?***

The solution may be to train some people in whom I truly trust, whom I have known for a long time. Maybe I will do it. I have trained some people in massage, tarot, and even in psychogenealogy, among others psychologists and psychoanalysts. But it seems trickier to teach Psychomagic. To exercise this discipline, one must have conducted truly profound spiritual work, to be detached from one’s passions, at least not be at their mercy anymore. Once again, it has been the work of my entire life.



## EXAMPLES OF PSYCHOMAGIC ACTS

*This will be the last segment of our dialogue, and I'd like for it to be a bit more relaxed. Let's dedicate it to a description of some psychomagic acts.*

That's fine with me, but a warning: to describe a psychomagic act is to enter directly into the language of the unconscious. It is not an innocent walk. You might be shocked—not to mention our readers . . .

*Well, I'll cling to my chair so I won't be blown away by the power of the descriptions.*

Go ahead and laugh, but I've warned you! Not that, by these acts, I tried to solve extraordinary enigmas; I am satisfied dealing with small, simple human problems. But what is more mysterious, more irrational, than our little problems? Our daily difficulties conceal an abyss; they're just the tip of the iceberg.

*I agree. Give some examples.*

Okay. We take the case of a dancer friend of mine. She had a child with a man who has the same name as her father. That is already very significant. Yet, it turns out that this dancer has the same name as her lover's mother!

*It's as if each one of them was searching for their father and mother, respectively, in the other.*

Curious, huh? In fact, people often fall in love with a name or a profession that reminds them of their mother or father. In her childhood, this dancer was left alone with only her mother at an early age and never had any more contact with her father. Not only did she find a man with the same name as her father, but she also arranged for him to abandon her and disappear, so she arranged for her daughter to have the same kind of relationship she had with her own father. Of course, she did not scheme all of that consciously; it has to do with a completely crude, unconscious strategy. Beginning to understand the extent of her havoc, she came to ask me to prescribe an act that would allow her to forgive her father and thus overcome her hatred of men. I asked her to tell me at what moment her father had broken off relations with her. "When I started menstruating," she responded. It is common for a father to break relations with his daughter when she becomes a woman. He feels that he's lost his little girl who sat in his lap, and he has a hard time giving up that kind of intimacy, that contact. Right away I asked her where her father was buried; then I suggested that she go to his grave. "There," I told her, "you bury, as close as possible to the body, cotton soaked in your menstrual blood, as well as a jar of honey."

### ***Blood and honey . . .***

The honey is there to breathe in life with sweetness, to signify that it is not an aggressive act but rather a loving one, an attempt at communication. There! An example of a very simple psychomagic act that allowed the reactivation of a brutally broken relationship and at the same time the resumption of an emotional evolution interrupted by a shock. Although an adult, this woman remained at the emotional stage of the young girl confronted with her first menses and the divorce from her father.

### ***Another example.***

A young Chantal, at four years old, found herself placed in a school directed by the sister of the mother of her mother.

### ***In other words, her great-aunt.***

Precisely. This great-aunt sadistically tyrannized the child. In working with me, Chantal discovered all the hate she held toward this woman. She could not forgive her, and she had no way to avenge her because the torturer was no longer in this world. So I advised her to go to the grave of this woman and, once there, give free reign to this hate: that she kick, scream, piss, and defecate on the tomb, but provided that she dedicate herself to paying close attention to her subsequent reactions to her demonstrations of vengeance. She followed my advice, and after letting off some steam atop the sepulcher, she felt a deep desire to clean it up and cover it with flowers. And, little by little, she couldn't help but surrender to the evidence that she, in fact, felt love for her great-aunt.

### ***Had you expected that?***

Of course. It was evident that all this hate was nothing but the deformed face of a scoffed-at affection. I knew that Chantal still held the long bottled-up love toward this woman who, even as the sinister headmistress, had represented Chantal's only link to her family. Following the expression of her hate-filled urge, Chantal would have to allow this long-contained love to come out.

### ***Another example.***

A woman had persistent vertigo. Simply drinking a bit of water made her feel bad. I advised her to place her feet between the thighs of another woman and rub the sole against her vulva.

### ***Ahem . . . What was the result of this shock treatment?***

The execution of this act provoked a crisis of tears followed by a saving awakening. There was a symbolic significance of her vertigo: fear of being swallowed by her mother, fear in relation to the female sex, and so forth. As you can see my technique is somewhat bizarre.

### ***To say the least, yes. How do you get such crazy ideas?***

They come. That's all! The truth is that I am an artist. That is indeed why I have taken the pain to explain my journeys. The diverse creative stages of my existence shaped me and developed my imagination.

***Has it ever happened, facing a patient, that nothing comes?***

Up until now, this has not happened to me. A response has always come. I suppose that my advice varies in quality and effectiveness; but that, I cannot say. It is up to the people who come to consult me to carry out the act and judge for themselves. But, in fact, I can hardly imagine myself mute in front of someone. Either it is magic or it is not! If you address me, I will inevitably have something to tell you. My prescription will always be well intentioned and will never be totally lacking in efficacy. To say what my accuracy rate is would be impossible. One thing must be clear: I do not place myself on scientific ground but on an artistic map. Psychomagic wants nothing of science but a kind of applied art possessing therapeutic virtues, which is absolutely different. Picasso produced more than ten thousand drawings. All of them more or less good. None is totally devoid of value; still not all of them are masterpieces. But, at the same time, each one is by Picasso, in other words, a product of the talent of a whole artist. "I do not look for, I find," said Picasso rightly; to find is a habit, a second nature. Anyone who has not developed the habit "To Find" has not felt this spontaneous spurt coming from the depths, but anyone connected to the creative fountain lets it flow, simply. Imagine a Zen master who does not accept a challenge posed by a student's question. Such assurance is rooted neither in science nor in megalomania but in faith, in the obvious.

***Let's continue. Give me other examples.***

A young man complains of "living in his head." He explains that he is unable to "take hold of reality" and to "advance" in the direction of financial autonomy. I take his word for it and advise him to find two pieces of gold and paste them to the soles of his shoes—he'll walk on gold all day! This should allow him to leave his head, put his feet in reality, and advance. In this example, I took hold of the terms used by the client himself.

I would also like to tell you of an act that involved my eldest son, Brontis.

***I'm listening.***

Brontis, at seven years old, played in my film *El Topo*. Before I tell the story, some clarifications need to be made. First of all, Bernadette, his mother, never really lived with me. When he was conceived, I had believed myself sterile. My father hated his own father and never signed his name "Jodorowsky." Not having any desire to carry on the family name, he had succeeded in convincing me in a subtle way that I would never have children and that I was thus the last Jodorowsky.

An actress with whom I was working said to me one day that she was convinced of my fecundity, to which I replied that procreation was not part of my destiny. We ended up sleeping together and, some time later, she announced that she was pregnant by me. Trusting her and knowing then that this child was definitely mine, I went through a kind of intimacy revolution, both inside and outside. The woman with whom I had been living had left, and I found myself alone, faced with this responsibility for which I was not prepared at all. I accepted the coming of the child—abortion was ruled out—but I

felt that I would be handicapped for a very long time filling the role of father. In addition, I did not have resources, and I could not really lend any financial support to the woman and her child, although at Brontis's birth, I did give him a teddy bear. A while later, this actress went to work in Europe and took the child with her. Six or seven years later, although I told this story in *La Trampa Sagrada*, I went through a deep awakening and made contact again with the mother of my son, telling her that I would from then on earn a good living and that she could, if she wanted to, send Brontis to me. He arrived with his teddy bear and a photo of his mother. I then decided to have him play in *El Topo*. Here's how the film begins: I arrive playing a flute. I am accompanied by a little boy, and I tell him solemnly, "Now, you are seven years old; you are a man. Bury your toys and your mother's picture." The child does it, buries the teddy bear in the sand, putting the photo in the hole with it. After the filming, we moved away together.

As the years passed, I realized that Brontis and I were communicating badly on the spiritual level. I had to admit that I had committed errors, and I sought to repair them. Brontis had often spoken of the toy that I asked him to bury when he came to live with me. That teddy bear was his very first toy, the one that I had given to him at his birth, before we were separated from one another for seven years. After the filming finished, we did not go back to get the teddy bear that Brontis had buried in the sand according to my script. I realized that I had brutally cut him off from his childhood and from his mother. After burying the portrait next to the toy, he did not speak again about Bernadette and quit writing to her. Later, he made this confession: "I did not suffer, because I imagined that the ants would go to live inside the teddy bear, that it would be their home." This thought was what had consoled the child at the time. One day, a long time after, when Brontis was twenty-four years old, I imagined a new act to repair the old act. On his birthday, I told myself, "I am going to bury a teddy bear in our garden and cover it with sand beside a picture of his mother." Then I put on a black hat, similar to the one I wore in *El Topo*, and asked Brontis to disrobe and come to the garden—in the film, the child was naked—to dig up the teddy bear and the photo. I made these remarks to him: "Today, you are seven years old, and you have the right to be a child. Come dig up your first toy and the portrait of your mother." When I decided to carry out the act, I came across some stumbling blocks. My idea had been to buy a teddy bear as similar to the first one as I could find. It had been a hard toy, filled with straw. But the industry had progressed, and all the teddy bears are now soft and flexible. So the old rigid teddy bear turned into a beautiful, supple, delicate teddy bear. As for the photo, the one that Brontis buried when he was seven years old was in black and white; but when I looked for a picture of his mother to use in the act—she had perished in an airplane accident—I only found one in color, so that having buried a gray snapshot, my son would dig up a colored image. These modifications, caused by "coincidence," greatly contributed to the act's success. What I want to tell you is that the stumbling blocks, the elements that one cannot control, also play an important role in Psychomagic. It is appropriate to try hard to accomplish a prescribed act following the given instructions and in the best conditions, but once one finds oneself in the situation, unpredictable incidents and other changes independent of our will become part of the process. In *El Topo*, I sheltered Brontis under a black parasol to protect him from the sweltering desert sun. The day when, here in Vincennes, we accomplished the act, it rained, so that I had to shelter him under a black umbrella. He did not really know what I was going to do, but he suddenly understood when he saw me imitate the clippety-clop of the horse and make like I was on my horse with him behind. He climbed on my back, and we went through the rain to the place where I had buried the teddy bear. He told me, curiously, "Today, I did not take the umbrella. I knew you would wait for me and shelter me," as if he had sensed what was going to happen. He dug up the teddy bear and the colored

photograph of his mother, we fell into each other's arms, and he cried for a long time with his head on my shoulder, cries of gratitude, like a child full of tenderness. From that day forward, he decided to mail a poem to me every day. Since that time, I have received some text from him every day. I keep these poems in a special box. I have to say that the communication between us is much better. As I speak to you now [1993], he is thirty years old, and we have a really beautiful relationship.

***That is a very beautiful story. Through this act, you voluntarily overturned a difficulty from his childhood.***

Yes, but in just the right way. I took the same elements associated with a negative emotional charge and breathed a positive charge into them. And in so doing, I also paid my own psychological debt.

# SEVEN



## PSYCHOMAGIC LETTERS

*Once an act is completed, you told me, the only payment you ask is that the client sends you a letter reporting the execution of the act. I would like to have specifics on the subject of this psychomagic mail.*

I demand this letter for two reasons: the psychomagic act, having all the characteristics of a dream, is very quickly forgotten if one does not put it immediately to paper; and what one receives must be shared. The best way to show retribution to a therapist is to report back on one's healing, the result of the therapist's efforts. It is a great sign of spiritual health to know how to thank. These letters are an integral part of the psychomagic act. They sanction and conclude it, so to speak.

*Whoa! That intrigues me. Would you consider reading some of them to me?*

With pleasure. Since I cannot show an actual act, the letters will give you a taste of it. For you to really know the process, I am going to comment on the first letter, sentence by sentence. Afterward, while I read the others to you, I will leave it to you to guess the hidden reason behind each act. Remember, they seem irrational at first glance.

*Let's go . . .*

Do not forget as I read these letters, that it is not me speaking but the person to whom I prescribed an act, the person rendering an account to me. This is the first letter, then, that I will comment on as I go along:

(Alejandro's comments are between brackets in the text. Some minor corrections in grammar have been made to the letters. Most of the originals are in Alejandro's possession and can be verified.)

I am a psychologist and I came to see you because I have not succeeded in working in my profession. I cannot earn a buck. You gave me the following psychomagic act: Take a double square flowerpot [I told her to take a double square flowerpot, like the tarot cards. Double square magic, also known as the spirit and the body. It was necessary to work with the two.] of a color chosen as an initiatory color. [What color? The person chooses the color that has symbolic strength for him, so that the object speaks to the person.] Then, divide the flowerpot into two parts and plant wheat! [There, I play with words. When you plant wheat, you put wheat in your pocket. It is not by coincidence that in French one sometimes calls money "wheat" ("dough" in English).] One part of the wheat is planted on one side of the double square flowerpot in order, in four lines, two lines of even possibilities and two lines of odd possibilities. [For me, to make the lines even and odd symbolizes the recognition of the man and woman inside oneself. In every

initiation ceremony, the odd is masculine and the even is feminine. Giving the same attention to man and to woman, we recognize the couple, man and woman, inside each of us.] On the other side of the double square flowerpot, the wheat is scattered randomly. [There is an ordered side, which symbolizes the necessity of the intellect to work methodically, and a side in disorder, indicating trust given to the unconscious. This spatial condition demonstrates that perfect order only exists next to disorder.] You told me to put potter's clay on the other side, the sterile side, and water it in the evenings with holy water [For me, clay is the human body. God made Adam by taking clay from the four corners of the earth—north, south, east, west. And with this clay from the four corners, he made a balanced man. So, the four corners reside equally inside us. If a person has not established equilibrium between his physical needs, his desires, his emotions, and his intellect, he cannot feel good. In a well-adjusted human being, these four energies are balanced. Concerning the holy water—that was prescribed so that the body is blessed. That is the first thing to do in an effort to recover contact with the feminine dimension inside oneself. In asking this woman to bless her body, I invited her to make it sacred and thus to no longer despise it, to recover possession of it.] then to make little hearts of wire and put them in the four corners of the room; you told me to then pray to my female ancestors. I buy green potter's clay. I put it on the left side and, at night, I water it with holy water (water I had beforehand kept on my altar next to my Buddha). I likewise obtained the wire to make the little hearts. [I gave her work to do because in order to find work, it is necessary that one learns how to work. These little markers should fulfill her and mean: learn to love work, or you will never work.] February 20. I make the little hearts and put them where indicated. I also add more potter's clay and holy water, and I pray to the women of my genealogy tree so that they will help me. The 24th, I continue adding the potter's clay, the holy water, and prayer. For a month, nothing happened. [In fact, everything has *already* happened.] Some little sprouts appear on the left, but not like the right side. [Here, she expresses a refusal to see the differences between the left and the right. She puts them in a competition. It is as if she says, "A woman is not like a man. She is weak, inferior." And while she remarks, "It is not like the right side," one cannot but reply, "Of course not! Because the left side is the left side!" What a mystery! We know that in our patriarchal society, the left side is the feminine: the symbol of the passive side of the body. In India, the right hand is the hand of God (the hand used for eating) and the left is the hand of Earth (the hand used for cleaning the backside). And when one spits, one has to do it toward the left, never toward the right. In this case, we should understand the message transmitted to the inner woman: negate your femininity. And the Psychomagic, which operates through synchrony or, if you will, poetry, becomes apparent through these squares of wheat: guard your femininity, do not neglect your intuition, attend to your inner woman! As if the wheat said, "I do not grow because you do not love the earth. And you do not love the earth because you do not love yourself in your feminine dimension."] After having added potter's clay and holy water from time to time, I saw that the wheat had sprouted. [Interesting. Supposedly nothing happened, yet wheat sprouted!] The sterile side is less dense than the other. [Always the comparison . . . But even if only one tiny plant had sprouted, in a handful of earth stolen from a cemetery in the dead of winter, that would still be a miracle. Wheat sprouted in her bedroom—what a miracle!] I have two rows of six plants and two of five. [Adding them up makes 22. We remember I had her use a double square flowerpot so that this forms a tarot card. So, in this square, in the shape of a tarot card, are twenty-two plants, as many as are in the Major Arcana—another miracle!] I found work on March 2, and I am still working at the moment. I thank you for having helped me.

***Success. So . . . I would be curious to hear another letter.***

So, here's another one, but I will not add any comments. The author is an American writer by the name of R. M. Koster. He had gotten writer's block and began to sink into alcoholism. His wife knew of my work, and feeling that I could help him recover his creativity, she encouraged him to make a trip from Panama—where he was living then—to Paris so that I could prescribe a psychomagic act for him. I noted that he had not written a book in more than ten years. I'll read the letter that he sent me after he was free of alcoholism and had started to write again. He describes a done deal.

***This should be good.***

In this writing, Koster adopts a humorous style that does not mask the tragedy that he has lived through. Listen:

Situation early March 1987: During the 1970s, I wrote three novels, all three very good, whose subject is an imaginary country of Central America, a metaphor of Panama, and my reactions to this country. Without my knowing it, these books would prefigure the story of the Republic of Panama because once these books were written, God decided to plagiarize me and turn my imaginings into reality. An artist predicts the future because, unlike others, he knows the present. While working on the third novel, I lost heart and became nervous when in the presence of soldiers. I had decided to not write any more about this imaginary country that was called Ténèbre and, in the last pages, I destroyed it by an earthquake. Since this book was finished in September 1978, I have not written anything more. I lost all confidence in my literary aptitude and began to drink. When I met you, I said: "Without confidence, you are not able to work. In order to write a novel, it is necessary to throw yourself off the top of a building. At that moment, you are writing without knowing where you are going. Maybe the firemen will catch you, maybe not; but if your chief concern is security, you have to go down using the stairs. One is secure but one does not write a novel. When one claims to be living life, but takes the stairs, one does not truly live. The moment comes when you have to take a leap." Your response was, "You are possessed by an old 'I.' When you wrote the book, it was another 'I' who wrote it, other characters who spoke. But these characters exist in your unconscious; they are part of you. And what do you do? You broke with them; you assassinated them. So, these beings are angry with you because you did not bring your novel where it was to go. In creativity, one must obey. When one is in the process of creating, it is necessary to give in, let the creation sprout like a mushroom. We must obey what sprouts inside of us, and you did not do that, you cut off your creativity." I accepted your analysis, having always been convinced that it is the book that searches the writer, the same way the female seeks the male, and not the reverse. You recommended I:

1. Burn my four projects that followed the third novel, those that I never could conclude. Which must take place in the room where I write.
2. Use an alcoholic drink to light the fire, this in order to remedy my excessive consumption of alcohol.

3. Since the room is on the first floor and since I had used the metaphor of the writer jumping from the top of a building, that is to say, giving his whole self to his book, you suggested, once the act was completed, to exit through the window rather than taking the stairs.

You specified other details, which will appear as we go through the description of my act. I gathered all the necessary material, and I put it in a cast iron cauldron: samples from the four incomplete manuscripts, a liter of vodka, the green string to attach the sheets of paper, a needle to prick my finger and then put a drop of blood on each of the manuscripts . . . I set it all ablaze. Immediately the room became horribly smoky. I took the cauldron—although it was really hot—and put it in the bathroom for fear that soot would cover the room and because I did not want anyone to see the smoke and call the fire department. I closed the door in the bathroom, putting the cauldron on the basin, and I began to cough and to suffocate. I ran out, I closed the door behind me and, for the next fifteen minutes, I went back from time to time to make sure it was still burning. Meanwhile, I began to prepare the window for my exit. Like all windows in this tropical country, it had glass, shutters, and a screen. First of all, I unscrewed the screen and glass, then I took down part of the shutter so I could pass through, a delicate operation that necessitated removing the metal supporting the glass. Finally, once the manuscripts were burned and the door opened, another thick smoke cloud surrounded me. Unable to take anymore, I took the cauldron and put it out the window. I placed it on the ledge just outside the window, then I ran to close the bathroom door to avoid the smoke spreading into the whole house. I went out through the window, crossed over the roof, and got down into the courtyard. I threw what was left of the manuscripts into the garbage. The next day, when I entered the bathroom, I noticed that, for some mysterious reason, a leaf of paper remained on the basin lid. Smoke remained in the bathroom and the walls, originally white, had turned black. When I picked up the sheet of paper, I saw that underneath it, the basin lid remained very white. I cleaned the bathroom but even today, six months later, one can still smell smoke and see the difference in the white rectangle on the basin top. Results of your Psychomagic: I have written an article about Panama, and I write with great success about Panamanian events. It seems that your magic concerns itself little with the genre and is only guided by the theme.

I sent Koster a postcard to congratulate him, pointing out that he did not burn the remaining sheet of paper. I also told him that if he wanted to write fiction, I could propose another psychomagic act. And he responded, “For now, I do not desire another act because I have a lot of work: a lot of ideas bustling in my head, cinema, and so forth. One knows when one is empty. Right now, I am full. Thank you.”

***Whether or not one has faith in this “Psychomagic,” you give verifiable facts here, which, I have to say, is really impressive. Do all your clients respond by letter in such detail as R. M. Koster?***

In general, yes. But it sometimes happens, within the framework of a friendly conversation that I propose an act without having been asked. In these cases, I almost never get a response, simply because it is rare that the act is completed. The person did not solicit it, the person heard it in passing, maybe with an amused curiosity, but without attaching any importance to it.

***Let's return to the importance of motivation, central to all kinds of therapy. It is important that the person truly desires to change.***

Of course. From the instant when the desire is truly there, and also the trust, everything becomes possible. I am going to read a long letter that illustrates well the principle that an extremely simple act can take a miraculous dimension if it is accomplished with faith:

My name is Jacqueline. I told you my father committed suicide when I was twelve years old, overdosing on pills. I also told you that with all my problems with money for so many years, I have had suicidal thoughts. You explained to me that my father committed suicide in a calm way and that I was, myself, slowly committing suicide, following my father's footsteps. I also told you that my mother died three weeks after my father's death, after several years of cerebral degeneration. I needed to express, in an act, something that was certainly suppressed for a long time. I needed liberation and, I believe, a miracle.

You assigned me the following act: buy a dozen beautiful oranges (firm, heavy ones), go to a nursing home, and give the oranges as gifts to a dozen residents. For twelve minutes each, chat with these twelve people. Then to remember to tell you the effect I felt. My father died on a Saturday, so you told me to complete the act on a Saturday. I tried to understand this task that you gave me. I thought that the nursing home would make me reflect on my father's age (at first, I did not dream about associating this act with my mother), that the oranges were a symbol of fertility and that in going to see people roughly the same age as my father, I would no longer reject him. If, on this occasion, I gave him life, I equally authorized myself to live and to no longer feel pressured to reproduce his act. Besides, twelve oranges, twelve people, it was for me the symbol of the twelfth arcana, the Hanged Man, in the tarot. It was necessary then that I follow through, that I go to the extreme of my pain in order to find joy; maybe it is necessary that I die one good time to be reborn and occupy my true place.

The days before I performed this act were not very agreeable. I felt bad in my body, I had palpitations, anxiety, I felt I was suffocating. I looked for a public nursing home, thinking the people I would find would perhaps be more needy, less enclosed than the elderly living in private institutions. So, I found myself forty-three kilometers away from the city where I reside, in a city sharing a name with my husband! To gain access, I had, under the advice of my friend, called the director to explain that I was a psychologist doing work on the loneliness of the elderly and that I wished to speak with a dozen people.

Arriving at this place, I quickly understood that I faced something for which I was ill-prepared. All the people I met seemed to have, in effect, curious, abnormal behavior. They were all, for the most part, "mentally insane." I had a closed heart as I found there an element of my past, which had made me suffer a lot: my mother, some years before her death had also "lost her head," and I had always rejected her, though I was never able to admit it. I found there something very painful. I had not chosen this place by coincidence. In spite of the pain, there was no question of turning around. I needed to do this; I had to do it. The pain clenched me; there had been so much suffering in these people's lives . . . I had the impression that they had thrown me a cry for help. I felt a lot of love for all these "elders." It was difficult for me to pay attention to the time that passed with each person. I know that the whole psychomagic act must be scrupulously respected, under penalty of "rotting." You prescribed me twelve minutes per person; in consultation, I spent about five hours with the first person who came to see me and I

did not look at my watch; there, it was necessary to concentrate (like a hanging) but it was good, without a doubt, indispensable, for me. That forced me to place myself in the present moment, to be vigilant, for me to realize that love given is felt by the other, that transmitted messages are not necessarily stronger because they are longer.

There were people who no longer had teeth, who could not eat the orange and did not want to take it. I told them to offer it to whomever they wanted. Others did not like oranges, and I told them also to give it as a gift to someone. That happened four or five times. Once, I was very afraid because a man who did not have his head anymore refused to take the orange even to give it to someone. As I chatted with him, I did not know if I could count him as one of the twelve people (since his orange remained with me). All that complicated my act a lot, and I was afraid of failing. This man followed me while I chatted with the others and, finally, I was able to convince him to take the orange. Suddenly, the man fell. He had deformed legs and could not move without the help of an apparatus on which he supported himself. Everyone looked at him, but no one moved. I helped this man as well as I could to get up but he did not want to sit up while I went for a nurse. Once he was up again, he absolutely wanted to move forward. There were people who told me he wanted to go to his room located in another wing. I continued to support him up the stairs where he wanted to go. While he went up the steps, I was behind him so that he wouldn't fall back and break his back. That may seem strange, but I was not afraid that he would fall on me and make me slide down the stairs. I felt this force of love surrounding us. Finally, this gentleman was able to go where he wished to go. It was lunchtime, and I still had an orange, I still had one person to see, and yet, I felt my act would not be valid. It was necessary to interrupt the act for an hour so that then I would return to chat with the last person and offer the fruit. And if all of it rotted because of this interruption?

Leaving, I found my husband who was waiting for me, and we talked about all of it. I gave twelve minutes per person, and I felt like I had left a lot of happiness, having contributed to easing a bit of suffering. But these eleven people—how much had they also given me! That might seem strange because it came from insane people, but they all thanked me for having come to visit them. Each time I said good-bye, the person said thank you. I believe that even if the intellect loses all or part of what we call a “sense of reality,” the heart still senses the love it is offered. That is, more or less, what I felt there.

At one o'clock, I returned to see my twelfth person with the twelfth orange. It was a man in a wheelchair, who had had a leg amputated. I then left, aware that this act had made me conscious of the fact that there are so many places where an enormous amount of suffering reigns, and everyone can, in his own way, contribute to easing this suffering. In going to this nursing home, I found myself facing my mother and my father. In closing, my parents both died in a three-week interval. I felt like a totally abandoned child; thanks to my visit to the nursing home, I felt I had given life to them both again.

When I called you, as you asked, to tell you what I felt, you proposed the following: “Go back to the exact place where you bought the oranges the first time, at noon, twelve o'clock,” you specified, “and buy one orange, the most beautiful.” I asked you what day I should do this and you responded, “What day had you gone there?” It was a Saturday. You said, “Do it Saturday. Then, seat yourself at the door of a church and slowly eat your orange, taking twelve minutes to do it. That's all.” Saturday, July 14, I went to the market. An old lady informed me that on this holiday the merchants would be there.

At twelve o'clock, very precisely, I took the orange that appeared to me to be the most beautiful, and I bought it. I took my bike, and accompanied by my husband, I found a church where I could sit in front of the door. I knew of the existence of a church named "Notre Dame de la Paix" that I never entered because its modern architecture did not really attract me. It is a bit outside the city. I dreaded only one thing: that the door would be locked—as all churches are now locked outside of normal business hours. So I parked my bicycle, and by a miracle, when I pushed the door, it was not locked. The interior of the church formed a quarter circle. There was a lot of stained glass—modern, of course—but I felt very well. The church was "hot." I sat down to pray, to give thanks, before starting to eat my orange. The priest arrived. He prayed also, and then he fussed about the church. I waited for the priest to leave because I did not dare to eat my orange right in front of the door. Then I took my bike, and with my husband, who had waited for me outside, we left. Upon leaving the church, I left the door open. For me, my act could not have been completed if the door had been closed; apart from that, I had the impression that the access to happiness was impossible for me.

After a bit, we went back to the church and were comforted to see that the priest's car was gone. But this time, I was really afraid that the door would be locked. Not only was the door not locked, but it remained grandly open just as I had left it. So I could, with real ease and a lot of pleasure, sit myself in front of the opened door. And at precisely one o'clock, I began to peel my orange. Earlier in the week, I said that twelve minutes to eat an orange would be terribly long—evidently, I do not ever take time to savor it. I inhale . . . Twelve minutes after one o'clock was, for me, a beautiful revolution, the way to end this chapter of my life and move toward a total transformation. I began by enjoying the first section. What I felt, I will not forget. As I write these lines, I experience the same emotion. I ate that quarter little bit by little bit. I was moved, I wanted to cry—all the while feeling joy. This time, I felt well and, maybe for the first time, gave myself the right to life. It was life I tasted, that passed through me, that poured into me. I really felt, before, that I had forbidden myself something very strong. Life, without a doubt . . . There, I knew God's door had always been open and that it was only me who closed it. I was in total communion with God. This emotion was intense. I looked at the time after having savored the first section: four minutes had passed. Time passed so fast, I would need to hurry up a bit. The feelings were still strong. After having experienced a certain pain, I went on with a real pleasure to eat my orange. I believe that for the first time, I knew what an orange tasted like. It was a discovery. In fact, it was as if I had eaten my first orange. I wanted the time to flow a bit slower to enjoy it longer. But the act was the act, and at twenty-four minutes after one o'clock, I finished my orange. I then entered the church, and I stayed there for a while without thinking about anything at all. I was empty inside, but happily; the emptiness was certainly a necessity for a new force to enter. Then I left with my husband, who had waited for me on a bench, very close, because it was important that he be near me on this day. And I realize that, in asking me to write, you supply more help. How can I say this? While I ate my orange, I experienced a feeling of acceptance of life inside myself. Perhaps this corresponded with the moment I was born, because as I wrote everything to you—I made several drafts—I had the feeling of giving birth to myself. I want to heal from my past, and I must say that, for the moment, it is my twelve-year-old daughter who helps me move forward. I love her above everything else, and I wish her happiness; but I know she will not find this happiness if I do not reflect an image of someone who wants to live.

*This letter is, in many regards, touching. The testimony, above all, of the faith this woman has in Psychomagic. The trouble with the “difficulty of life” is that it behaves like a very vague evil. After reading this long missive, I rejoice that Jacqueline could feel alive again, but I would have liked to find a shorter letter, one testifying to the resolution of a more precise difficulty, more easily circumscribed, thanks to Psychomagic.*

I will let you read the letter by Armelle, a young woman, half-French (by her mother), half-Vietnamese (by her father). She felt complexes among the French, and her femininity was threatened because she did not accept her Asian roots. Very affected by the war, her father renounced Vietnam. I advised her to go to his homeland to find her roots. Beforehand, she should, at Christmas, eat a mango, saving the stone and germinate it in a glass of water, then plant it in an earthenware pot for thirty-three days.

Then it was necessary to take it to Vietnam to plant it in her paternal family's garden. Here, then, is what she wrote to me once the act was accomplished:

I left for Vietnam on August 5, 1986. When the airplane began to fly over Vietnam, we encountered turbulence, although from the beginning the trip had been very calm. Then, I began to be sick, and I spent this time of flying over Vietnam in the restroom vomiting. It seemed that a part of me refused this country (maybe because of the disgust my father held toward his own race). Arriving there, I felt I saw my father in all the little men with whom I crossed paths (my father left Vietnam at fourteen years old). And then, a strange thing, I was anguished about having my period, and I had experienced the same feeling at the time of my first menstruation. So I think I then recovered contact with my femininity. I could also observe the femininity of the Vietnamese women, so natural, delicate, and gracious. I was shocked that no one took me for a Vietnamese, and it was then that, for the first time, my French roots appeared clearly to me. I arrived August 13 at my father's city of birth. I was very moved, and I cried almost all night, prey to an immense solitude and a full rage I felt toward my father. The next day, I went to see the house of my great-great-grandmother, and the whole family found itself reunited to celebrate the ancestors. We burned incense before the altars of all the ancestors. I had a strong feeling in front of the tomb of my great-grandmother, though I never met her. Then, I planted my mango tree in the garden, with the whole family's assistance. This moment was extraordinary: to dig a hole in Vietnam's yellow earth to plant this tree whose roots were surrounded by black earth from France. The contrast of the two lands was, for me, a fantastic symbol. In addition, strange coincidence, the garden was full of mango trees. The trip was very important for me. It allowed me to acknowledge my femininity, to analyze and give value to the heritage of this culture, to recognize that I had based my racial complex on an illusion. Merci.

*Why did Armelle have to wait for Christmas to eat the mango then bury the stone precisely thirty-three days later?*

This girl not only experienced a complex face-to-face encounter with her double origin, she also found herself between two religions. I therefore had to persuade her unconscious to accept itself as a gift of the two cultures and to combine them within her. Christ was born on Christmas and died at thirty-three years of age, only to rise from the dead. It is this entire cycle that Armelle transported to Vietnam in the form of a plant.

## ***Have you had the occasion to “heal” other racial complexes?***

Yes, of course. One day I went to visit a man with an African father and a French mother and, almost immediately afterward, I saw a woman in the same situation. They did not know one another, and they came to consult me separately. They both experienced a deep sadness toward their mixed race. I decided to unite them in a psychomagic act, one that they would complete together. I told myself that through this act, simultaneously completed by two people of the opposite sex, they were going to embody the inner man and woman, the animus and anima. Their skin was neither very light nor very dark. I asked them to paint themselves one in black, one in white, and go by car to the Arc de Triomphe, then, from there, to walk down the Champs-élysées. You are two tubes of paint. One bears the inscription “flesh” the other “Negro.”

The bathroom is tight, and the girl at my right finds herself ill at ease. She has no energy, no flexibility. She seems about to cry. She chose to paint herself first as a white female. I paint myself then in black. Periodically, I feel my stomach in knots, then I tell myself, “Let’s go. This is nothing. It’s going to be fun.” In fact, there is nothing amusing about this. I remember what pushed me to accept this walk down the Champs-élysées wearing a wig and a Rasta tam. My companion is white and dressed in black. We walk. At first, fast, as if we wanted to run, but soon we slow down. I attract all the attention; no one seems to notice the woman at my side. A lot of people look at me, smiling, and I feel really small, as if I shriveled inside myself. I hear people commenting, “Hey, Rasta man!” I smile. I do not feel my body; I do not feel the ground we’re walking on. It feels like I’m dreaming, and I’m ill at ease. I want to rip off my wig and clean my skin and scream, “This is not me!” We enter a shadowy corridor, and I calm myself a bit. When we go out, I am better. The rest of the distance seems easier, and I notice one thing: whatever the image that the people have of me, this is no more than an image. No one can see me just as I am if I do not decide to really show myself. If even then—who is really capable of seeing me? We arrive at the end of our first trip. In the car, back home, I dream of this notion of image, and I tell myself it would be interesting to play a bit with mine. Back home in the bathroom, I scrub my face and the black color goes away; it drips into the sink. I remember that, all my childhood, I had wanted to see the color of my skin drip into the sink. This time, I played the role of the white man. I find the paint more difficult. I am not as good at imitating the aspect of the white flesh. I have the air of a drag queen. The image that I give myself this time is that of a heavy metal fan with a boom box. Painting myself as a white man gives me the impression of committing a sacrilege. It is interesting because this feeling did not exist earlier. We walk down the Champs-élysées again, but this time, no one seems to notice me. A lot of people, however, observe the girl at my side. She is very black and dressed in white. Throughout the distance, I ask myself if the people would feel as uncomfortable as I do at the moment if they knew what I was doing . . . Though, all of this is, in the end, very impersonal. No one saw anything. People are indifferent; each is doing his own thing. A little tour of the Virgin Megastore, and the trip is finished. I feel very light. I have this crazy desire to spend money on new clothes. It is as if a dream has ended.

***Very interesting. But the letter does not mention the subsequent effects of the act.***

Sylvain and Nathalie had very positive reactions. They both, some time later, found partners, Sylvain with a woman of no color, Nathalie with a man of color. As much as I know, these two couples are doing well.

*Up until now, we have mentioned truly painful complexes but, if I can say, purely psychological: a man unable to earn a living, a writer unable to write, people unable to live with their mixed race . . . Could Psychomagic aid a person who has undergone a very precise exterior trauma? For example, a traumatic experience unfortunately very common, in my opinion, an abortion?*

I will show you a letter relating to this problem. Brigitte felt guilty about an abortion undergone in the absence of her companion, Michel. She was depressed and not resigned to this idea. Her relationship with her friend was in a crisis; they drew it out more and more. I proposed an act so that they could mourn the fetus together and definitively bury it. Brigitte and Michel must collaborate building a box out of fine wood, lined with a fabric of the best quality, the box of course symbolizing a coffin. In addition, they should choose, in mutual agreement, a fruit to symbolize the fetus—they chose a mango. Brigitte, naked, should place the fruit on her stomach and keep it there with a thick bandage. Michel should cut the bandage with a pair of scissors, as if he were a surgeon, and extract the mango. Brigitte should relive all the feelings she had during the operation and express them loudly. After placing the “fetus” in the box, they should go bury it in a very beautiful place. That done, Brigitte should kiss Michel and with her tongue put two stone marbles, one red and one black, into his mouth. This is how I prescribed the act. Here is the letter from Brigitte:

We searched for the material in a bit of haste—like the hour before the termination. I chose the same day as the termination—a Saturday at 6:15 p.m. The event took place at Michel’s house. I took the exact position that I had on the operating table, my legs in the air, naked, the mango fastened to my stomach with a bandage. Michel comes near. He is dressed in white, like a surgeon. He proceeds very fast, and I scream, yell. I again feel the effects in my stomach, I cry a lot, I hate, he mutilates me. Michel cuts the bandages and puts the mango in the box. Right away, I have a doubt: it should be equally necessary to cut the mango with the scissors. Michel wants to do it afterward, but I hurry him. I cry a lot. Michel tells me, “The mango cannot live anymore, anyway, once buried.” Then Michel sits next to me; he caresses my forehead. I feel that he hates me. He is a thousand leagues away. It is necessary to find a place to bury the box. We leave, by motorcycle, and go toward Saint-Germain-en-Laye, through beating rain. The box is in my backpack. I again feel bitterness and, at the same time, a deep relief. Finally, we stop at Marly-le-Roi in the park of the chateau that Louis XIV preferred. The place is absolutely magnificent. I cry a lot. Michel holds me, but he seems distant. We dig a hole with our bare hands, sheltering it from any glances. The evening is near. We kiss. I put the two little stone marbles in Michel’s mouth. Michel spits out one of the marbles, the red one, and it falls to the ground. I immediately sense a crisis; Michel responds and finds the red marble. I put it again in his mouth. As prescribed, he spits out the black marble, kisses me, and gives me back the red marble. I throw the black marble in the park’s fountain, and I feel very relieved. With the red marble, I go, as you advised me, to make a red ring. Psychosomatic reactions took place—intense redness in my cheeks—just like those that appeared after the operation. I felt very liberated from the guilt and my energy restored. I am calm, serene, accepting of what can happen. I found trust again in myself and in Michel. I choose life, whatever happens in it. My internal energies are restored. I

do not feel any more morbid panic. Thank you.

***What does the kiss with the two colored stones mean?***

I employ the symbols of life and death (red and black) as well as chance. Giving him a kiss is a manifestation of love. Brigitte gives Michel the opportunity to give life or death. Spitting out, first, the red marble, Michel manifests his desire to kill the fetus, to not be a father. He, himself, collects the marble and, in introducing it again into her mouth, he gives it another try. And this time, he chooses to spit the red marble—life—which he deposes in his companion's mouth. He thus manifests his acceptance of another child to come. In tossing the black marble into a fountain, Brigitte returns her urges for death to her unconscious, finds the trust again in Michel, and frees herself of her fears, such as her culpability. At present in her body, life circulates, not death anymore. From now on, her sex is a space for creation—not destruction anymore.

***This act illustrates well the consistent technique of “employing the language of the unconscious.” That, if I understood correctly, is Psychomagic’s essential drive.***

Yes, but I also give simple and logical advice that anyone can understand.

***In this case, how does this advice work?***

For it to be effective, I must seize or provoke the occasion, to find the right moment to dispense it. It is a question, so to speak, of “timing.” The same advice given at the wrong moment will not have the least effectiveness. This process is comparable to soccer: If I send the shot in the direction of the goal without there being an opening, my gesture, as precise as it may be, will be futile, because the ball will not penetrate the wall of the defense. However, if I profit from a moment of hesitation, the goalie's weakness, my shot will hit the bull's eye. Similarly, when a person lets down their guard a bit, I often try to kick a psychological goal. We understand well that anyone who is prey to a vice continually maintains a position of defense. The ego refuses to yield. I must then seize or provoke a moment of distraction so as to let an order pass through the line of defense, into the unconscious. In order for the client to adopt the advice, it is important to penetrate his stubborn “I” and to touch the much more impersonal zone of the self.

***Is there a letter illustrating this principal?***

Here, not exactly a letter, but a testimony drafted by someone you know, the celebrated cartoonist, Jean Giraud, a.k.a. Moebius:

I met Alejandro in the seventies. We worked on the film *Dune*. Every day for two months, he brought me a new surprise in his totally surreal way of approaching the creation of a work, or any thought or situation, for that matter . . . One of my most gnawing problems at the time was smoking—how to spend these long hours with this fascinating person without affirming my thoughts through big puffs of “fumoduction,” cheerfully conversing over some refreshments on the terrace at a café, once the magic was implemented. Silence around the table, all the attention turned toward what I had started. Alejandro contemplated me with a discreet and friendly mirth.

I thought about this dear smoke, intangible chum, always available, effective, and reassuring, with the merry clacking of the lighter, the scratching sound of the matches . . . Was I ready to abandon these apparently indispensable pleasures? But I also thought of the gray ashes, which invade everything, of the shortness of breath, of the phlegm and pain in the mornings . . . I decided to take the step! And then, I was very curious. Not only was I going to see Alejandro perform a magic trick, but also I was going to be the object. One last thing incited me to jump: the others sitting around me, waiting for my response. Was I going to disappoint them and deprive them of magic in action? “Okay, I am ready!”

“Right now?”

“Right now.”

“Give me your pack of cigarettes.”

I took out my pack of Gauloises, a third of the way gone. Was he going to cast a spell on them, transform them into a pumpkin? After some bizarre incantation, he whispered with seriousness: “My magic is very powerful but very simple. To quit smoking, it suffices to make the decision, and that you have already done. The problem is to remember your decision, and that is where magic takes place. Who has a pen?” I extended to him my ballpoint pen and gazed, fascinated, at the precise gestures of my friend who took apart the cellophane wrapping on the pack. He took the pen . . . I was finally going to see into what cabalistic sign, what powerful charm, he was going to transform my opened pack. “It is very simple. On this side, I write this little word—No, and on the other side this little phrase—I can.” Alejandro wrapped the cellophane back around the pack, and he returned it to me as if it were a bomb ready to explode or nothing less than the Holy Grail wrapped in a golden fleece. I should keep this pack a half-dozen weeks until, completely cleared of the least desire to smoke, I make it a gift to a friend in need—one had to wonder what this “no” and “I can” meant. I have not, since, had the least desire to touch a cigarette again.

*Well, here again, one says it is faith that saves! And yet . . .*

You know, it happens that an act that appears absurd heals an illness, because this act “speaks” to the unconscious, which takes symbols for reality. The illness is a symptom of a deficiency. If the unconscious feels that this lack was filled, it ceases complaining through the intermediary symptom. As an example, the following letter is from a woman named Sonia Silver:

I came to see you at the Mystical Cabaret October 30, 1992, and asked you a question. For eighteen months, I had felt an intense pain in the back of my neck. Can this pain be the effect of a decline in the spiritual point of view? I have consulted doctors, acupuncturists, masseuses, osteopaths, bonesetters, and healers looking for a cure, and of course, I took anti-inflammatory medicine, cortisone, underwent injections, and so forth. Nothing worked. The evening of Wednesday, October 30, you prescribed a psychomagic act: I had to sit on my husband’s knees while he sang a kind of lullaby behind the nape of my neck. Although you did not know it, my husband is an opera singer. He sang a Schubert tune! And there, I was healed. How much thanks I would like to be able to give!

*So what happened?*

It's simple: I made an equation with the nape, the past, and the unconscious. I had the intuition that the relationship with Sonia and her husband had not bloomed normally. Putting her on his knees, the husband was going to symbolically play the role of the father while she symbolically became a little girl again. In addition, because he sang a lullaby to her at the level of this painful point, she would fulfill a never truly satisfied childhood desire: to know her father comes to put her to bed and communicates with her on an emotional level.

Abandoned by my father, my mother destroyed all of his photos and discarded all of the souvenirs of my progenitor, who had died when I was three years old. So I had no mementos. I experienced a deep anger at the idea that I would never know his face. I attended one of your conferences, which dealt with the genealogy tree. I asked you what I could do when I had not met my father and did not possess any photograph of him. You noted that while my father had not acknowledged me, I did know where he was buried—my mother had told me—so I should go to the gravesite and identify myself as his son by sliding a photo of myself into the grave. That is what I did, after some hesitation. Little by little, my anger disappeared. I accepted the idea of never knowing his traits. After fifteen days, my mother, who thought she had destroyed all memory of this man, found a big photograph and gave it to me. This “meeting” with my father was and still is a great happiness. For the first time in my life, I am aware of my identity. Now I feel reconciled and full of love toward my two fathers, as I do toward my mother. Your advice was providential. I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

This example is a good illustration of one of my convictions: to know that reality functions like a dream. At the very moment when Patrick put a photo of himself in his father's tomb, his unconscious aroused reality to the symbol and united with the father figure. So this can crop up in the dream that is life. Not having been able to prevent this union, that is to say, the appearance of the truth that the mother perpetrated, she finds the photo and gives her son the image that will make him feel complete. You see, for me, all the events are intimately bound to each other. An act well carried-out reverberates on the ensemble of reality.

***So the mother collaborated with the act unconsciously.***

That is why it is important that the people implicated in the act be informed of its objective so they can participate, with fervor, toward its realization. I will give you an example of a conscious and successful collaboration. I advised Gerard, a man who suffered from feeling a perpetual emotional demand regarding his wife, to buy two big church candles and a ball of red wool to carry out the act with his mother. Here is his letter:

Easter Monday, after having lunch together, my mother and I went to Notre Dame to look for two church candles. There were a lot of people. Then I invited her to have dinner at a Chinese restaurant. We talked a lot, about God, about life, our family. Then we came back. A bit before midnight, we went to her room—she has her room, and my father has his. We positioned the lit candles on the mantel.

They were oriented north to south. I had them to my back, one to my left and one to my right. Then we tied ourselves firmly together with the red wool. We were tied together completely:

feet, legs, pelvis, body, arms, hands, head . . . We ended up in an embrace, our arms around each other, and when one moved, the other had to follow. At this moment, I revived the events lived in my early childhood, then my adolescence, with my mother. I had believed in those days that I always had to follow her instructions, to see things as she saw them, to do as she did, to think as she did . . . I then felt a heat in the level of my stomach, then this feeling disappeared. We stayed attached until midnight. We were both very calm. At midnight, I began to cut the wool. First, on the bottom, the feet, the childhood . . . We each cut half of the knots, the lines, but she had me cut a few more than she did. When we could separate ourselves, I thought, “Now, from this instant, I am free.” I told her thank you, and I hugged her. We then talked again for a long time, but she was tired. So I blew out the candles, took one, and returned home. The last part of my act consisted of making her a gift, which I should first dream. One day, something imposed itself on me: the only gift worthy of compensating for the gap provoked by the act was to thank her for what she gave me. Saturday, May 9, at midnight, I wrote with my blood, “I thank you for everything you have given me. I love you. God bless you.” Then I sealed this letter with wax from the Notre Dame candle, which I had lit while writing. This act transformed my life. I ceased hanging over my wife like I had in the past due to an emotional demand coming from my childhood.

I would like to now show you another letter relating to a problem of identification to the mother. The author is a painter, the victim of strong asthma attacks. Here, I used the oneiric element handled by the artist—his own painting. In addition, this letter is interesting because it presents the case of a person who has already had recourse to Psychomagic and apparently found himself healed, until a relapse, which sparked the need for another act. An act can sometimes make a difficulty disappear without exactly eradicating it in its depth. It is appropriate then to prescribe a new act:

. . . I asked you why, following a visit to a pestiferous ossuary in Naples, I had a strong asthma attack, after a year without any relapse. I also asked you why, since the day of my art opening of the exhibition of the “angels” (the opening, by coincidence, being June 8, the eve of the twentieth anniversary of my mother’s death), I had started to have asthma attacks again, and again required daily medication, which I thought I’d never need again. In fact, I believed myself definitively healed after having, under your advice, buried all my medicines under my mother’s tomb exactly one year earlier. Actually, I had not had one attack until this day in Naples . . . You told me that, maybe, I do not allow myself success in the profession I love because my mother had died after a long sickness without having been able to blossom. You advised me to paint a skeleton and to draw over it an angel so the opaque dress would completely hide the bones. You proposed, in a way, to raise my mourning by giving my mother the status of angel. This idea meant a lot to me. I followed your advice and, in spite of my current inability to paint, I forced myself to go to my studio to make the drawing. I painted the skeleton, but as I did not like it, I made another one over it. Then I made the white angel. Some days later, I had a strong asthma attack with bronchitis, which took a while to get over. I was in despair and so tired that I was forced to go to the mountains for a rest. The biggest confusion prevailed in me, as did a great doubt about everyone and everything. Why did Psychomagic fail this time, to the point of provoking a reverse result to what I wanted? A mystery . . . I was very disconcerted until I thought about it, and it occurred to me that in drawing the angel, I had made two skeletons—two skeletons for one angel! I understood that unconsciously I still had a strong attraction to mourning, this mourning

that even made me sick. Upon my return, I remade the Psychomagic. This time, I drew a skeleton, then an angel. The next day, I decreased to half the dose of the medicine. The day after, I actually ceased taking anything. I was cured! Thank you!

*Alejandro, we must be careful to not drown our readers in an avalanche of acts. The letters we've read manifest different facets of Psychomagic. Will you choose a last letter in which a common psychological mechanism would be disempowered thanks to this amazing discipline? I think, for example, of fear. It is accepted that fear often masks a refused desire. Have you, in your archives, an updated "case," which was resolved by this dynamic, in itself very banal?*

I, of course, have many! Here is a letter to this exemplary regard:

One night in May, returning from your conference, I was attacked at the entrance of my apartment building by a masked man who tried to rape me. He did not succeed, but I was very afraid, and I have, without a doubt, concentrated my fright in the right side of my body, which, the next morning, was paralyzed. I conceived a living repulsion regarding men: I could not stand contact with them anymore, and sometimes I could not even sit next to them. The fear took hold, and if I returned home late, I would run up six flights of stairs. I, who beforehand never locked the door, isolated myself from the exterior world, barricading myself behind three bolts. But the fear, it did not stop behind the door, it accompanied me everywhere . . . So you prescribed this act: "Go to Pigalle and act like a prostitute. Find some pretext to not go with the men who proposition you." A leaden weight could not be heavier on my shoulders . . . I chose July 17, the seventeen corresponding to the Star tarot and to Aquarius, my sign, thus, putting myself under its protection. I went ahead of time to learn the place and to observe the neighborhood, which I did not know. This was not at all an easy role for me to play. The evening of the 17, at 9 p.m., I dressed in a miniskirt, a low-cut shirt, high-heeled shoes with fishnet stockings, and heavy makeup—destination Pigalle! I really wanted to not meet any one of my neighbors on my trip. On the metro platform, a man approached me asking by turns for a light, the time, directions . . . I felt like I was in another person's skin, and I observed what happened inside me. A friend went with me to Pigalle, and his presence was good for me. I sat on the terrace of a café. Some men came toward me, asking me to go with them. I refused, under the pretext of a benign illness. Some believed I had AIDS.

After having dinner with my friend Hervé, I returned exhausted, but I no longer had any fear and was able, hence, to walk alongside a man or climb my six flights of stairs without a problem. I was no longer isolating myself, and I felt at peace.

This act permitted me to see that several personalities live inside of me, to express them, to live my fear, and to go beyond it. I felt liberated and that I was now able to get ahead of it and continue on my way. Without this act, I would be, undoubtedly, completely repressed. Instead I am open.

When returning from a lecture last Wednesday, I realized a man was following me. He wanted to have his way with me. The psycho-magic act returned to my memory, as well as all the strength that I mustered from it. I confronted this man, and in his eyes, I saw fear. I was now aware of my own strength, and he could see this, too. He left the building, and I went home, calm and confident.

I send you my thoughts of love, joy, and harmony for you and your family.

*Let this beautiful letter end this sampling of psychomagic epistles!*

# EIGHT



## FROM IMAGINATION TO POWER

*Alejandro, isn't Psychomagic too simple, a bit too short? Analysis often takes years; a number of therapies are spread out over long periods of time . . .*

You know, a labyrinth is no more than a tangle of straight lines. I ask myself if analysis and therapy do not sometimes have the tendency to introduce curves into straight lines . . . And then, an act has a more definitive door than any conversation. However, I should make one thing clear: it is rare that I prescribe an act to a person without having beforehand studied his genealogy tree—his family, parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, and so forth.

*So, each act we have reviewed is nothing but an episode in a longer process.*

Yes, but a serious episode and decisive. If I walk with a nail in my shoes, my whole world, my sensibility, will be affected. Before trying to go farther, I have to refine my vision, to take out the nail. In the same way, when one suffers a trauma, all of our existence senses it. So it is important to remedy the trauma.

*In addition, it seems to me that Psychomagic helps to solve certain very specific, precise problems. I see it more as an isolated intervention rather than, say, a global therapy.*

Gilles, there is but one global healing: to find God. There is no other. Only the discovery of our interior God can heal us forever. The rest consists, for better or worse, of beating around the bush. No therapy can be partial.

*What do you have to say on the subject of these methodical and, at the same time, insane conversations we've been having?*

It is important to reaffirm the importance of the imagination. In a certain way, with you I've had an exercise in imaginary autobiography. Not in the sense of "imaginary," since all of the reported facts are true, but in that the deep story of my life is of a constant effort to broaden the imagination, reduce the limitations, to apprehend its therapeutic and transforming potential. If I teach anything, it is the imagination.

*Alejandro Jodorowsky, professor of the imagination . . .*

Exactly. I teach people to imagine. Most of the time we have no idea what the imagination can be, we cannot conceive of the extent of its range. Because, in addition to the intellectual imagination, we also

have the emotional imagination, the sexual imagination, the physical imagination, the economic imagination, the mystic imagination, the scientific imagination . . . On all levels, including what we call “rational,” the imagination is open. It is at home everywhere. So it is important to train it to approach reality not just from a one-and-only narrow perspective but from multiple angles. Ordinarily, we envision everything according to the very restricted paradigm of our beliefs, of our conditioning. From such a mysterious, vast, unpredictable reality, we cannot perceive more than what is filtered through our miniscule point of view. The active imagination is key to an expanded vision. It allows us to envision a life according to points of view other than our own, to think and sense things from different perspectives. This is true freedom: to be capable of leaving ourselves, crossing the boundaries of our little world to open up the universe. I would like the readers of this book to at least accept the idea of the therapeutic power of the imagination, so that Psychomagic, at the end of the day, is no more than a modest application of this very real power.

# PART TWO



## Lessons for Mutants

# A SYNTHESIS OF EXPERIENCES

by Interviewer Javier Esteban

Alejandro Jodorowsky only agreed to begin these Lessons for Mutants on condition that the results could prove useful to others. My response was that if it was useful for me, a skeptical and much damaged man, it would be for others. Accordingly, we decided to create this work, which compliments, ten years after its appearance, his mythical work *Psicomagia* [Psychomagic]. These interviews are, therefore, the fruit of an experience between someone willing to share knowledge and someone who wants to learn. More than confirming certainties, our conversations weave constant doubts together with kind responses.

Out of his personal circumstances and knowledge, Jodorowsky has opened roads and shortcuts in his search for happiness. Far from being a guru (he does not like to be depicted this way), our author is an evolved being who—precisely for this reason—laughs at himself. His paths are appropriate for a whole effervescent generation of mutants who make use of individual formulas of consciousness and self-actualization. To heal, to grow, Alejandro shows us that man has tools like meditation, art, dreams, certain sacred substances, magic, alchemy, language, humor, and the tarot, within his reach. The first part of Lessons for Mutants is dedicated to these techniques.

Throughout a hectic life, Jodorowsky has traveled a fantastic human voyage of thousands of years in a very short time. He has experienced many different cultures while at the same time playing an active role in avant-garde culture with his contributions to comics, film, and literature. This trip through the memory of humanity is a constant and imaginative challenge and a profound exercise of release whereby, above all else, it is necessary to know who we are, forgetting part of what we have learned. The author reveals these methods to us in the second part of these lessons.

Jodorowsky conceives these experiences of breaking-off and changing in a personal style, totally distrusting the church, “marionette” or agent of the soul. From freedom and for freedom, he uses a synthesis of experiences with therapeutic and necessary results to complete the human who has stopped fighting for pure survival and seeks inner development. At the margin of whatever revelation or sacred text, of all dogmatic or ideological traditions, Jodorowsky understands that reality must be perceived in the first person and achieved artistically. To this formidable search, to this crazy score, the third part of this interview is dedicated.

The ideas of the author about the distinct levels of consciousness and so many other questions connect with the perennial philosophy in its pure state but are far from the narrow frameworks of traditional religions. Although he speaks of God, Jodorowsky is neither theist nor atheist, spiritual nor religious, rather he is simply a person. For him, health is equivalent only to the morale; because our fulfillment cannot wait for the beyond, rather, it must carry itself out in this world, breaking the boundaries that impede it. Some of these ideas attest to a phenomenon called “religión a la carta,” or “religion by the book,” which recently came slinking into our society.

Alejandro is a visionary in so far as his level of consciousness leans out beyond the limits of time. He is a “luminous” being who hates the possibility of establishing a school, but who, for years, has dedicated his time to the surprising undertaking of civil sanctity. His intuitions about society, religion,

and the destiny of humanity have been gathered in the fourth part of this interview, in the form of visions that include an exercise in futurology, where the reader will find many of the author's ideas and impressions.

Through these interviews, Alejandro explains the therapeutic activity that he considers fundamental and that he carries out in many workshops around the world. In the chapter dedicated to the art of healing, he goes back to clarify some aspects already put forward in his *Psicomagia*. The last bit of this work is a hymn to life, which reflects the luminous and happy attitude of our character.

The transcription of Jodorowsky's words has in no way been easy, but I have been as respectful as literarily possible—though my limitations are evident at not catching all the abundance of his oral discourse. He trusted in being able to pass on some of his intuitions to those who seek answers and experiences on the marvelous journey of life. I avoided interviewing Alejandro specifically about the techniques he uses, although here almost all of them are spoken of. For this reason it is, in the end, a work of impressions, a guide for everyone who desires to be transformed. This is not a manual for scholars but a testimony to the way he does things and lives things; it is a modest lesson in the form of a dialogue in which I represent a new generation of mutants.

I have to confess that I believe that in principle Alejandro agreed to carry out these interviews simply to help me, even though afterward he liked the results and considered them useful for others. I went to Paris with a certain busybody complex. Some days, I dedicated myself for precisely an hour a day to meditating at home. At the end of each interview, I could mentally translate his responses into examples that flowed like a waterfall of images. The state of unburdened consciousness led to a pleasant, telepathic drunkenness. Questions connected in sequence like chains of images. We finished by talking of the saints' auras, without any motive. At the end of the second day, I confessed, "I don't know if all this will be useful, because I don't remember anything you said." Jodorowsky had the kindness to answer my questions while in a trancelike state. During these divine hours I felt like a sculptor hammering an immense block of marble from which a face would appear, a strange portrait that at the same time would provide a mirror to others. "How do you see it?" he kept asking me, as if I were painting. During the days I went to his home, the dynamics were varied. My questions often quickly lowered the level of discourse, but at other times would catapult us into higher spheres. We traveled a lot together, and the inebriation caused by his presence would often last for hours. Of all the images I keep from those days, there is one that sometime visits me in dream: we are paintbrushes that paint our own lives, transforming them at every instant.

JAVIER ESTEBAN  
PARIS—BARCELONA, MARCH—JULY 2003



## KEYS TO THE SOUL

## I

*Asleep and awake are two secretly united faces of reality. Understanding dreams is a path to knowing and transforming ourselves. But, to what extent can we do that, keeping in mind that they are gifts that we don't ask for?*

Yes, we can. Throughout my life I have passed through various phases with respect to the dream. I come from a neurotic family; I worried; I had parents who hated one another—all this caused me to have horrible nightmares. I had to defeat these nightmares by confronting them, taking on my neuroses. It is true that since my youth I've used the gift of lucid dreaming, directing my dreams. At first, the lucid dreams would present themselves in the form of temptations. I would find myself aware that I was in a dream, and I wanted to obtain fame, become a millionaire, have sexual experiences. Finally, what happened is that I got trapped. Whenever I asked for specific things, I got lost in the dream and consequently lost lucidity. I had put myself into a dream that was again unmanageable. Later, in my dreams, the desire to be a magician began to appear: I played with the images, I turned into a guru, I wanted power. Again, I became trapped and lost lucidity.

Dreams keep changing, and you can do different things in them like a demiurge. But then you realize that when someone dreams, it is for a reason, and it is not healthy to interfere in the parade of images.

I've finally reached the point of simply being a witness to my dreams: I contemplate them and I rest. Actually, I don't know really if I dream or not because in my dreams the character I am is just as I am in real life.

*Do you blend waking and sleeping?*

No, it's not that. What I mean is, when you dream, normally you are not you, you have other personalities, you are capable of doing things that you don't do in real life. In my dreams, however, I help people: I continue giving classes; I read the tarot; I give conferences. There are really no differences between what I do in my dreams and what I do while awake. This is at the margin of language or symbolic content. The other night, I was in an airplane in complete darkness, and the airplane broke into the light. What I have now are happy dreams; I don't have nightmares anymore. I am not afraid, because I control these situations. I sleep without any tension. I accept the dreams just as they come. In a certain way—I do not say my ego because I am not referring exactly to my personality—my identity has solidified. It has coagulated. My personality in my unconscious is exactly like that in my real life.

## ***What therapy do you recommend for overcoming nightmares?***

I began with Freud, and it was very funny: for him, dreams are repressed desires, frustrated desires, that sort of thing. I was also frustrated with Jung: I dreamed and then I prolonged the dreams in half-sleep, continuing the story, interrogating the dream to see what it wanted to tell me. Then I continued with awake-dreams, developing the imagination. There are many magnificent therapies. In lucid dreams, we get close to what the Senoi tribes do: they work with their dreams during the day, carrying them out through a kind of theater. In other schools, they sculpt them, make them into figures, paint them . . . This is how you introduce dreams into your real life, isn't it?

But all of this is useful for when we are sick. Once you've cure yourself, you do not need to do anything. Simply live, simply dream. There is no repression.

## ***Do dreams teach us the true nature of life?***

Life teaches us the true nature of life. And the true nature of life is a mixture of dreams and life. Because all life is a dream! The dramatist Pedro Calderón de la Barca already said this. He had a very high level of consciousness for his time. When we live the now, this instant seems real to us, but an hour later it will be a memory, and the images of the memory have exactly the same quality as the images of a dream.

We could say that we are going to stage a dream and that everything, all of our comings and goings, will infiltrate the dream world and convert the dream. But what happens with dreams? Well, it's not like that at all. We dream and our dreams infiltrate themselves into our real life. The dreams make themselves reality, just as reality converts itself into a dream. Everything you dream ends up being real.

## ***You tell us we can access the departed who appear to us in our dreams and that they dwell in a place in our memory, that they can give us advice and help us . . .***

We have a collective mind and a collective unconscious that exists in some realm. There must be a region of the dead that meets us in the collective unconscious. This region is called "hell" in some cultures.

## ***It is through your dreams that you became conscious of the existence of magic, right?***

In lucid dreams, I can voluntarily change some things, but only up to a certain point. I cannot change the whole dream but only a part of it. With magic the same thing happens. You can produce changes in reality, but you cannot change all of reality.

## **II**

## ***As the basis of your therapy are art and poetry fundamental?***

I believe that all human beings must dedicate themselves to writing poetry for half an hour every day, without worrying if the writing is good or bad, if it will be commercially successful or not. Poetry as a constant in life purifies the ego. Every day we should carry out a free act, a little thing that serves

others, like giving a chocolate to a child, simple things. I have come to true depravity in searching for goodness. Sometimes I put cash in the pocket of a sleeping homeless person, so he thinks he has good luck. I invent miracles. Even if you don't believe in miracles, you can do little things to help others.

This room is full of thank-you cards asking what I desire as compensation for the help I bestowed. My response is: nothing, because I help freely. I do all this based on time I can set aside for others.

***What do you use to keep you company when you create?***

For thirty years, I have always worked with background music: Celtic harps that have a hypnotic effect. If I am very inspired, I put perfume in the bottoms of my shoes or draw enneagrams (a nine-pointed geometric figure symbolizing the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control) with a honey-soaked little paintbrush on the soles of my feet. And, in moments of creative drought, I dye my testicles red with vegetable dye.

***You say art cures. In what way?***

Art cures because we have to cure ourselves of not being ourselves, of not being in the present. There is a Hasidic phrase that says, "If you are not you, who? If this is not here, where? If it is not now, when?" If you are capable of figuring out the when, the here, and the who (the You), you are being yourself, and you have already cured yourself.

***To create art is to know yourself?***

Yes, but to know yourself is to know humanity and the universe. It is to pass from the singular to the plural.

***Could you explain?***

Think that the need for healing is produced by a lack of awareness. We become ill because we have cut our ties with the world. Illness is a lack of beauty, and beauty is the union. Illness is a lack of awareness, and awareness is union between oneself and the universe.

***Which artists have fully achieved healing?***

The most difficult thing in the world is to create sublime art. Very few people have achieved this. But I could cite René Daumal, who learned Sanskrit and was a student of Gurdjieff; he achieved it. Federico García Lorca is an opposite case: he could not achieve it, he did not know how to. When you read *A Poet in New York*, it makes you sad.

***You have said that literature serves nothing if it does not heal. And if it only heals the author? Can art cure some and make others sick?***

I remember some artists who said this world isn't worth anything, that it is a pigsty, that we are going nowhere, that God is dead, and all those things. Bad literature is this. To expose your navel, to tell how you drank your morning coffee amid general disgust, with everything around you rotting. While

the world is dying, I drink my coffee. Or I perform my little sex acts. This is old-fashioned. One must cross this neurotic curtain. I, for example, confess that I cannot read Marcel Proust. He's too sick for me, and his neurosis can contaminate me. Every day I see neurotic cases, why would I want to read others? Nowadays Franz Kafka is on the loose everywhere! I go to mail a letter, and I find myself with Kafka in the post office: an employee full of problems.

***What writers and painters would you save? Which would be in your prized curative art gallery?***

What a question! You're working with the established notion that the art world is like a prizefight: we decide which is the champion painting, the champion book, the champion symphony, and so forth. But I do not see the world like that.

In art, I see structures. For example, in filmmaking, rather than asking what's the best picture, I would ask by genre: what's the best western or the best drama. I have my house full of westerns. In my library there are novellas by Silver Kane and other authors, along with comic books, books of oriental philosophy, of Sufism, Kabbalah, magic, alchemy, psychoanalysis . . . I am a man of my time, and in my time there is the Internet. So one cannot and should not talk about personal work; we have entire masses of works by category, not by authors. The Internet has revolutionized all this. I had whole libraries. My human ideal would be an old dream: all the books of the history of humanity, all the painting in history, all the films, music, sculptures, everything.

***And art that does not cure, you also include?***

Though it does not cure—and this is another thing—it entertains. A healthy person can read Emil Cioran or Michel Houellebecq and laugh a lot. However, I would not produce that kind of literature, because it is totally obsolete. But there it is. One can go from Kafka to Castaneda and continue to learn. In the same way that a person continues to evolve from one level of consciousness to another, art evolves from one level of consciousness to the next. It is collective and not solitary. I cannot say the best painter is Leonardo da Vinci. I will say he reached another level of consciousness, but as he was an individual, he could only reach to a certain level. If you pay attention, his machines lacked the motor because they lacked energy. These marvelous machines did not provide the essential, which is energy; they used primitive, limited forms of energy, based on pressure and water. Leonardo could not resolve this problem. His limitations were fixed in the humanity of that time, in its collective nature. Do you understand? If you ask me the classic question, "What book would you bring with you to a deserted island?" I would respond, "A computer with Internet access." Obviously.

### III

***What do you think is the true aim of language? How do you interpret it or make it useful?***

Language is before everything an activity of the body. It corresponds with the nature of the nervous system. From my point of view, we must be able to produce beautiful and poetic language. A healthy language. Mental illnesses, like physical illnesses, are reflected in the way we speak. There are demented words, like sick, tuberculosis, or cancerous: words that are not life-giving but violent and criminal. Illness and the insane language of illness retaliate and are destructive.

Besides, through language, we transmit illnesses, and we access inferior levels of consciousness. The levels of consciousness of language coincide with those of the human being. Just as the human body has been evolving, so has language. If we hold back our language, we use a form and a content that already does not correspond to us, that is outmoded. If we employ a sick vocabulary that is not ours, we undermine ourselves, little by little.

***There is the use of the foul, the grotesque, the brusque . . .***

If you are referring to curse words, I will tell you that curse words are congenial revolutionary tidbits that are designed to break the familiar molds, social and all other kinds. We have the impression that we are totally free to utter curse words, however, using them reduces the level of consciousness. The curse word is not useful—or if it is, it is only at first—to free oneself. At first it seems revolutionary, but it does not drive us to change. It is like jargon. People go about distorting language through jargon, which, in principal, can be useful for establishing strong linguistic ties with the group, but persistent use of jargon swiftly lowers the level of consciousness. The only language that lifts the level of consciousness is the sublime language: that of art and poetry.

***By what you've said, to create a new language it is necessary to quit seeing the world in a rigid way. What should we change in our language to change ourselves?***

I am working on a book of definitions called *Intelectualmente correcto* [Intellectually Correct]. All of us think badly and, to change this, we need to exchange some concepts for others. I have begun by changing the following expressions:

- *Instead of* never, very few times
- *Instead of* always, often
- *Instead of* thief, someone who took something that belongs to someone else
- *Instead of* infinite, unknown expanse
- *Instead of* eternal, incomprehensible time
- *Instead of* you are my teacher, you show me how to learn from myself
- *Instead of* I want to do, I am being ineffective
- *Instead of* I want to be, I reject what I am
- *Instead of* give me, allow me to take
- *Instead of* imitate me, I do not respect you
- *Instead of* my wife, the being with whom I share my life
- *Instead of* my work, what I have been given to do
- *Instead of* you are like this, I perceive you this way
- *Instead of* mine, what I have now
- *Instead of* to die, to change form

As I write this book, I am listening to people speak on the street. I am creating paths through language. Also I am contributing definitions that break with the commonly accepted ones. All of these are defined by their own negation:

- Happiness *is* to be each day less anxious
- Decision *is* to be each day less confused
- Bravery *is* to be each day less cowardly
- Intelligence *is* to be each time less dumb

In this way I can understand things differently. I consider it important for me to work with language this way because, for simple lack of understanding, we're moving toward a catastrophe. We are thinking poorly. As such, in our language we should replace:

- I begin *with* I continue
- Beautiful day *with* today I feel good
- To fail *with* change activity
- I know *with* I believe
- I am to blame *with* I am responsible

***What is the mechanism through which the fine arts can advance our level of consciousness?***

The explanation finds itself in its own definition: fine art and artistic creation. Beauty is the maximum limit we can access through language. We cannot reach the truth, but we can get close to it through beauty. In language there is no truth. Beauty is what initiates call “the flash of truth.” It is the maximum a human being can reach.

***Ugliness would correspond, on the other hand, with a lower level of consciousness?***

To say beauty we talk about ugliness, to say light we speak of darkness. They are opposites. To cite one, we are already talking about the other. If we have to define ugliness, I would tell you that many times I looked for a concept contrary to beauty. With this system of opposites we spoke of good and bad, of beautiful and ugly. I went through all of that and, in the end, I rested on two conceptual tools: useful and useless. Useful is all that helps us to reach higher levels of consciousness; useless is all that lowers our level of consciousness, anything that reverberates through our nervous system provoking depression and self-destruction. Attacking our own health drives us toward destroying others. However, the higher level of consciousness drives us toward a euphoria with life and toward the desire for immortality, eternity, and infinity. Immortality is probably reached—since death is a solitary phenomenon—in a collective way: by exalting and defending humanity. The human race, as a collective, can be infinite. Death is solitary, and knowing this helps us to understand the world. The

negation of death is the negation of the individual.

## IV

### ***To deal with life, is intoxication necessary?***

Getting drunk produces a great emotional happiness, but alcoholism is horrible. It can happen that we drink sporadically as an escape or diversion, but it is not necessary. I think intelligent people have to open the doors of perception, but it is not necessary to do it like Timothy Leary, who turned his whole life into an intoxication; he became an addict and died drugged without ever knowing himself.

It is one thing to break free of your own limitations, but avoiding yourself is another thing. I do not recommend that anyone avoid himself. I do not make apologies for this escapist intoxication. Neither do I recommend marijuana, because it is a strong Prozac, a tranquilizer; it is not good to be sedated all day.

### ***And take mushrooms at least once?***

The experience produced brings you nearer to the metaphysical and to the mystical. When one smokes marijuana for the first time, it also opens the senses: it teaches us to eat well, to breathe well, to feel music well. But once or twice is enough to learn! Otherwise we end up creating an army of sensual fools and loafers who believe themselves to be geniuses. In a similar way, alcoholism ends up turning people violent, and this serves very little.

### ***Would you have become the way you are without having used hallucinogenic substances?***

I have not become anything. What have I become? (*He stands and turns himself around.*) To where have I arrived? One does not arrive. In my case, I needed to take them at a certain moment, forty years ago, when I was going to make *The Holy Mountain* and had to play a master. I needed to understand the mind of a sage. I did not have this mentality, and I was aware of my limitations. So I hired a guru, Oscar Ichazo, who was one of the creators of the Enneagram of Personality and Claudio Naranjo's teacher. I paid him seventeen thousand dollars to give me LSD and to guide me. It was a pure acid, a powder he dissolved in orange juice. One hour later, he gave me a marijuana cigarette. The first trip lasted eight hours. After some time, we took more. There were two sessions in which I learned a lot, and I broke my own boundaries. I believe these experiments should not be made in a festive spirit, nor in the company of people who have not attained a higher level of consciousness. It can happen that, during the experience, these people appear to be demons.

This is the explanation for why I took these kinds of drugs. The consequence is that it opened my mind and served me by demonstrating how far I could go. Gurdjieff said drugs are useful for that: You are in the cellar of a building, and the drug makes you rise quickly to the terrace. You are in the underground garage, and you jump fifty flights. You see the whole horizon, the whole city, and when you return, you realize that to go up again, you have to climb each floor on your own, without drugs.

***Like in Plato's Allegory of the Cave, but being able to investigate beyond . . .***

Yes. But, in this case, climbing with your own strength, without LSD. It has to do with being able to see it all without the drugs—which one can do. Otherwise it serves nothing.

***In the West, we lack a point of reference or a culture of using these substances. For example, mushrooms here are consumed in the most brutal ways, at parties, without reference or finalization. María Sabina García, the shaman, provided them for you.***

She sent them to me by way of Francisco Fierro, who was her assistant. He knew how much I had to take, how to vomit, what to do during the experience, and all that. This experience can become a very wise ritual if you don't try to make it a religious experience. Because it is you who has to make the trip, without controlling it from the outside or imposing archetypes, among other things, because your archetypes are inside you and your trip is yours.

***Many people practice syncretic worship with ayahuasca, just as with other drugs.***

There is no reason to mix ayahuasca (a South American psychoactive plant) with holiness and things of this nature, as with other drugs. Ayahuasca must be taken calmly, without rites, and guided by someone who knows it, as with all psychedelic drugs.

***Do you mean to say that these substances must be taken with someone who knows them, but who does not project any religious meaning or his own interests or personal story onto others?***

Exactly. With someone who has developed her spirit and who acts as a guide, but without imposing any particular concepts on you during the experience. Who, when you are anxious, shows you the way to exit. I was talking with Oscar Ichazo and, suddenly, the telephone rang. I was in the middle of the trip, and he said to me, "Answer."

"But how?" I asked him.

"You can be in both worlds," he answered.

I answered the telephone, I spoke normally, and then I continued with the trip. This is the mark of a good guide.

I could, and each person can, be in two worlds: the one called real and the other. That is an important lesson that only a master can give. This is only one example of what we can learn by tripping.

***Or could it be that the substance opens the way to knowledge?***

For me it was a huge step. I recommend doing it at least one time and always with a guide. I saw that my wife, Marianne, had spiritual limitations—even though she was young, spoke six languages, was a university graduate—precisely because she had received a French rationalist upbringing. She wanted to continue the path of the tarot, and I told her she could not remain in this prison of the rational, that she needed a psychedelic experience. So I went with her to Holland. I rented a room with a window opening to the sky, and at two or three in the morning I had her eat some mushrooms so that the effect would last until sunrise. I guided her. I marked the path, and it resulted in being a decisive experience in her life. If I had taken advantage of the fact that she was on a trip and seduced her, she would have

lost all the benefit of that experience.

Even marijuana should be taken as an initiation, like alcohol at a bacchanalia. The ceremonial banquets formed part of this culture that we have lost.

### ***What strange mechanism of the conscious can make these substances break our boundaries?***

We are used to living in a linear world, in a cubic and rational architecture, and because of this, we are obligated in a given moment to break boundaries. Many times we cannot do it, precisely because we are prisoners to our minds. For this reason, we need an experience in which our mechanisms of perception leap, with the goal of knowing other worlds.

The shamans were primitive people, but now it is we who want to take mushrooms at our leisure, not with their rites. I am not going to take anything with a shaman of yore. For what? So that taking ayahuasca gets me to sing to the Virgin Mary or to the snake? What does all that matter to me? Some followers of gestalt therapy put on Wagner to take ketamine. No, thanks!

When you take substances, you should be out in nature, waiting for the light of day to arrive, with as little outside interference as possible. It's enough to be with a teacher who tells you to go here or there. And one or two trips is sufficient for the brain to open well enough to last for the rest of your life.

It really has nothing to do with drugs. An experience with mushrooms is not like consuming drugs. I had some mushroom powder, and I decided to give it to some loved ones because I thought it was better that I gave it to them than that some imbecile gave it to them with the excuse to show them a party and to be dumb.

### ***I imagine that these substances are sacred for you.***

Now wait a minute—let's not fall into the trap of the "sacred" concept. Everything can be sacred to a saint, even dog excrement. And nothing is "sacred" to a normal person even if it may be "useful." It is true that these experiences have different functions and results according to the level of consciousness of the user. Psychedelic substances were, in the first place, taken by shamans, who had a level of consciousness superior to that of the tribe. My thesis is that they should be recommended only for people who have a high level of consciousness. There are people with an almost beastlike level of consciousness who can lose control or accentuate unhealthy tendencies with these substances. One must be very careful, not only about who provides the drug but also about whom one takes them with. I have a phrase to sum this up, "I do not know where I go, but I know with whom I go." One should not take this path with people who are incapable of understanding the experience, because they will try to slither in and interrupt your trip. Give drugs to soldiers, and you will turn them into assassins. Give drugs to a saint, and you can make magnificent works. Take special care with this. We must not think, as some would hope, that to toss LSD in the water supplies will make society better. This would be a danger to the public.

For example, ayahuasca has fallen into the hands of people with a romantic-infantile mentality who have converted it into a religion. Grave error. Low levels of consciousness will, in a systematic way, squander these energies. But it is clear that at the right moment, when it is agreed to within a rational social framework, like we've been given, it is necessary that the people in positions of responsibility

have an experience of knowing that there is something out there beyond the rational.

***But will there be people who do not need them?***

Of course. At this moment, I do not need them. It is like being in a dream, and I am already there. What do I gain with seeing hallucinations and things that I know? The experience is beautiful, agreed, but what am I going to find there? It is useful when you feel you have a limitation and you take it to help you better yourself. The person with a low level of consciousness is afraid to discover his limitations; it angers him, and he cries for knowing it. The person with a higher level of consciousness, the only thing he desires is that the trips show him where his limits are so he can defeat them, and he appreciates them deeply because he can be better. The people with low levels of consciousness look for someone else to affirm their value, but people with higher levels of consciousness, what they seek is someone to point out their defects so they can become better.

V

***Could you explain to us what the tarot really is?***

The tarot is a metaphysical machine. An organism of images and forms that is very difficult to summarize, one of humanity's first optical languages. The tarot has twenty-two Major Arcana. If with the Spanish alphabet one can write *Don Quixote*, imagine what you can do with twenty-two cards, to which it is necessary to add another fifty-six Minor Arcana.

The tarot responds to some rules of optical projection. It is like a mirror that permits you to develop yourself by seeing more and more of yourself. I use it for others and also for myself, to gaze into this mirror and be able to understand ourselves. If, for example, I ask it, "What is prayer?" it responds. "What is love?" it explains it to me. "Who am I?" and there you appear. The tarot shows us the client's unconscious, and if it can help, it helps. It serves to heal.

***You can use the tarot for everything except reading the future.***

When people are interested in the future, and they ask me, for example, "Am I going to find a mate?" I tell them, "This I am not going to tell you because it would influence you. What I am going to explain to you is why you have not yet found a mate." They want to know, "Am I going to have money?" and what I show them is why they do not have money. "I do not know whether to live in Madrid or Barcelona," another tells me and, well, the important thing is to know why you can't decide. I reduce everything to the present.

Actually, I don't believe in the future. It is something I do not even want to touch, because the brain has a tendency to obey predictions. To the person who has a bit of faith in you, if you say he is going to break his leg, he breaks it.

At times, what happens is that this big magic machine, the tarot, when it falls into the hands of pseudo-tarot readers, is reduced to an instrument for reading the future. They convert it into an object. It is a crime that they do not know that the tarot is a sacred work of art.

***You have said that in order to read the tarot it is necessary to distance yourself from the client,***

***to not interfere at all in that person's life.***

Yes and no. To read the tarot, it is necessary to identify totally with the client, but without interfering in that person's affairs. It is necessary to respect him, without expecting to influence or use him.

I have always read for free—except for some months in the beginning when I had to make a living—not because I was generous, but because the tarot is something useful for others. If I charge, I distort it, and in this way, I cannot know it in depth. To read the tarot is to do good, and it is to make art.

***In other words, what you do with the tarot is “consult the client.”***

Yes. It is like a Geiger counter. It tells you what's up, what's happening, how a person is doing. It is told to the client himself. And at times, when a doubt or a choice exists, it responds. The tarot clarifies; it shows the will of the client and helps to uncover what is inside of him.

***How can we understand what the tarot tells us?***

At the beginning, trying to develop telepathy, I tried to predict. Then I dedicated myself simply to reading it, which did not impede my trying to see how the client was doing, how was his health, what were his passions, sexually or intellectually. I accept the client with his limitations. I feel his voice, I notice how his breath smells, and at times, I touch him. I capture all I can before pulling a card: I see how he mixes them, how he moves, how he acts, how he speaks to me.

## VI

***Throughout the history of humanity, the metaphor of personal transformation has taken different forms. One of these has been magic. Is magic possible without superstition?***

Magic is not superstition; magic is the nature of the world. The world is not logical or rational, it is magic. Everything is closely related. For this reason, I called my book *Reality Dance*, because all events are aligned, united; time is not linear, the effects are sometimes produced before the causes; there are mysteries. Seventy percent of the world cannot understand it, like the chimpanzee does not understand 90 percent of the world. We have a lot to learn. Reality is miraculous, it is magic. It obeys nonscientific principles. Reality is not scientific.

***And when we do not understand the nature of the world, we create superstitions?***

Exactly, and we believe in things that are not real because we need them.

***Does magic work in reality or in our way of seeing the world?***

In magic, if you are conscious, you can see the metaphors, the analogies; for it to rain, the shaman makes noise with his fingers on the earth. If you have evolved, you realize, at a certain level, that this works because the analogy is useful. The unconscious accepts the metaphors. When you know the

laws of the unconscious, you realize that magic drives these laws. Magic works on the unconscious.

I speak of the unconscious of reality, not of our little unconscious. To be mysterious, reality shows that a personal unconscious exists, as well as a familial one, one of the group, one of the planet, one of the universe. That is reality. The world is as much manifested as it is not manifested. The world is as much what it is as what it is not. The world is as much the possibilities that appear to us, as it is the infinite possibilities that hide from us.

Everyone is an immortal consciousness, an exact reproduction of the universe. Your unconscious is a particle and at the same time the totality of the cosmos. And say what they will with respect to your limited body, you are the complete consciousness. Let them tell you what they will about your ephemeral flesh; if you achieve integrating yourself into the divine consciousness, you are immortal. However, to achieve this, it is necessary to have enough humility to erase yourself personally and accept being only a channel. But if you present yourself as an all-powerful being who knows everything, you will be a fraud. For all that I tried to be more than what I am, I am not more than what I am. It is necessary to be conscious of what we are. The greatest power of your life is to be able to help, and the greatest blessing man has is to be able to live in peace. There are mysteries, but one does not dominate them. I have known little telepathic miracles that each day are a little bigger. But I do not arrive at things found in legends: “a teacher looks at someone and knows his name and birth date.” I don’t get to this, but I get to other things. Telepathy exists, I know.

***How would you define black magic as opposed to white magic?***

Black magic is a sick magic that tries to profit from the nature of the world. It is a useless magic because it is directed toward destruction. It exists only for those who believe in it. Opening that door can be very dangerous.

***How can you explain the existence of a white magic and a black magic?***

The spirit has deep roots, long branches. You can melt infinitely into the negative, into the darkness, or you can rise toward the light. It is a question of choice. But I do not want to speak about black magic because, like I said, it is a sick thing.

***The technique, isn’t it actually applied magic?***

We do not know what it is. We know it works. Just as we do not know what energy moves the universe. Still we ignore it. We can intuit how the world works, and this we call by many names, including God. What we are not able to understand, we call magic. But, in reality, it is a use of magic. We are talking of a use of magic, but we do not know exactly what it is. We do not control it. We cannot yet.

***What are the laws of magic?***

There are four: to love, to dare, to be capable, and to be quiet. “To be quiet” I understand as “to obey.” Strength at rest is the greatest strength. For this reason, at times, I tell this initiation story that relates how the strongest man in the Chinese Empire makes his demonstration of strength by taking a

butterfly from a little box and saying, “I am so strong that I can take a butterfly by the wings without hurting it.” This is to be quiet.

It is necessary to manifest knowledge only when it asks us to, and if it does not, be quiet. One is giving; the other is forcing others to receive.

### ***And how do you define “to love,” “to dare,” “to be capable,” “to be quiet”?***

“To love”: If you do not love, you do not advance. There are those who do not want to cure themselves. The gospels tell us of when Jesus asked the paralytic if he wanted to walk, because if you do not want it, not even a god can cure you.

“To dare”: To cure yourself you must be willing to face the changes that the cure is going to produce. For forty years the paralytic was an invalid, so to be cured, for him, meant to not have money—he would not be able to beg anymore. When you are sick, you are really calling to others to cure you; you are asking for tenderness. Sickness is a request comedy. The sick person is screaming to be loved. It is necessary to dare to be cured, to enter into a new individuality in which you “unknow” the way. The cure produces a change and, in a certain way, a new personality.

“To be capable” means that once you are doing something, you enter into the fight, and you do not have to be your own enemy. To be capable, it is necessary to be one and to not be the other, to not fight against yourself, because that will produce a big neurosis and a failure for you.

“To be quiet” means that when you try to broadcast what you won, you lose, because now you’ve become an exhibitionist. This is the problem that some gurus have: they show their saintliness, and they lose it through the same act. The true master is invisible: no flowers, no necklaces, no rings, no photos, no school, no disciples. But to the true master, all of humanity is the disciple. In an unguided way, the true master lets wellness slip in and subtly introduces knowledge that can raise another’s level of consciousness. To be a master, neither school nor ambition is needed. A master obeys a superior universal will.

### ***What does an alchemist do?***

First we should define what an alchemist is: one who seeks the philosopher’s stone, who changes base metals into gold, who seeks a universal solvent, and finally who has the elixir for lasting life. The philosopher’s stone: the alchemist wants to develop inner values as much as possible, to grow as a human being, and thanks to this, to raise the level of consciousness and climb to other dimensions.

The elixir for lasting life is a person who accepts life and lives everything as it is without self-annihilation.

The universal solvent is a person who has developed divine love in his heart. Love is what dissolves all resistances.

## **VII**

### ***Why does laughing cure us?***

In a certain way because to laugh is to dislodge what hurts or tortures us. Laughter distances us from

our inner conflicts and unties the knots. It helps momentarily. It opens the levees and portions out happiness for a few moments. It works as well as a sneeze: quick and liberating.

***That's also how jokes work.***

But there are many kinds of jokes. There are aggressive jokes and racist or sexual jokes, which are sick. People display a great deal of sickness with these kinds of jokes, which liberate them from the anxiety of being filled with these negative things. But certain jokes have a metaphysical, philosophical, or human content, and these are profound jokes. Humor was always used in the mystic schools. The Sufis told a story about the idiot sage Mullah Nasrudin, the Roshis Zen have something similar, and there is a whole series of jokes about rabbis. In the initiates' training, the joke is as important an element as the sacred texts.

It seems incredible, but that's how it is. Similarly, we have to understand folk tales, fairy tales, and legends, which are also valuable.

***Although our culture denigrates them.***

Yes, because our culture degrades everything that has deep meaning, for example, the tea ceremony. Tea was an essential element in oriental cultures, especially in China and Japan, like coffee in Sufism. However, now we drink tea at all hours, when in reality, it's a sacred tool like marijuana is. When I went to Holland and asked how to take mushrooms, they answered, "Put them in pizza." People eat them without any reverence. Everything sacred has been lost.

Recently, they sold at public auction the last art objects that André Breton left in his inheritance, and the curious thing is that the best treasures he had were his rocks. Breton dedicated himself to picking up beautiful pebbles. That, for him, was the best artwork that existed. Logically, they have no commercial value. Poetry doesn't sell either. That is the marvel of true art, that no one has yet found a way to commercialize it. Man, when he achieves an adequate level of consciousness, feels the sacred in everything around him, and the world takes on this essence. The plants, the rocks, the joke: they are sacred; these things are consecrated. I knew a shaman who cured laryngitis with an infusion of cow dung.

***Do you remember some special joke?***

Each day I have a favorite joke. The one from yesterday had to do with a man who wins the lottery and they ask him if he is happy with the millions and he answers, "I am not happy because I bought two tickets, one gave me millions, but the other gave me nothing." Instead of seeing the happiness in life, this man was anchored to the negative.

***It is necessary to laugh at the absurdity of the world and to not believe anything . . . but not even in ourselves or in our own mutations?***

Of course. There are different kinds of humor. Black humor, which creates distance from the world. Normal humor, which is to laugh at the world. Panic humor, which is to laugh heartily at oneself and be happy about life. It is not helpful to laugh *at*, like vulgar humor does, but to laugh *with*, like

surrealist humor. Or panic humor, which is simply to laugh: to be happy in the middle of chaos and destruction. The Chinese showed their agreement with this idea by inventing the game of dying: a master died doing a handstand, cackling. This is to understand existence.

TEN



THE TRAIL OF LIFE

I

***Do you think we can escape our origin or that we are determined by it?***

We have destinies from the past, without a doubt, but what is necessary is to be conscious of them without being subservient to them. We can choose each step of our existence. In this is our freedom, in not letting the past determine our present and in not repeating the past.

***Is it possible to intuit, as some traditions maintain, these previous experiences or influences that weigh on our lives?***

I cannot talk of past lives, except to say that before birth there was something—I do not know what—and that after death there will be something—I do not know what either. This is all I can say for sure, the rest I do not know. Now, although we can imagine past lives, it would not be possible to say for sure that they were true. There is no way to prove it.

***Certain religious interpretations, to explain pain to us, point to those who are born blind who are paying for something committed in another life, maybe because they poked somebody's eyes out.***

Okay. Let's accept it. But this person who poked out those eyes in another life, in an even earlier life poked out the eyes of someone who, in another incarnation, was an executioner. So in that way everyone is guilty and there are no victims—or everyone is a victim and no one is guilty.

***So you do not think we should justify the inequalities of origin by supposed karmic debts.***

Quite right, because besides being false, it would be anti-therapeutic. Things cannot be justified by destiny. We are marked by a family, by educational and sociocultural life. It is something that we have carried since we were born, but this does not mean to carry out a destiny. One sees the world differently if he speaks English, Spanish, or French. We are trained by a culture that formats our brains. We have to fight against this imposition in order to be ourselves.

***Reading your work one gets the feeling that we are obligated to free ourselves from the conditions to which we were born.***

We have no obligation. It would be good if we liberated ourselves, but we are not obligated.

***To develop, do we need to unstick ourselves from what we came into this life with?***

To develop in what way?

***I mean spiritually.***

Krishnamurti developed a lot spiritually, however some people committed suicide because of his theories. It doesn't only have to do with developing spiritually; it is necessary to see what interests us. I do not believe in spirituality, I believe in health.

***Okay: to heal is it necessary to remove ourselves from our origins?***

Everything we carry—we are like worms—has to be tangled until it is converted into a butterfly. We should not strip ourselves of anything. What we have received is a treasure. It is not necessary to castrate ourselves or eliminate any part. It is necessary to inseminate and to transform what has been given to us.

***Perhaps someone cannot be happy in her family or in her class, in her world, or with her upbringing, and she wants to continue with what she received?***

If she does, let her continue as is. But everyone in the world has a cross. Mine is mine, yours is yours: I only can make you conscious of your cross and, apart from that, you free yourself of it or not. This depends on you.

***Is it possible that, without mending the world and society, we can be okay with ourselves?***

We cannot. Or better said, we could be islands of perfection in the middle of imperfection.

***Haven't we idealized rebellion against everything as a feature of absolute individualism?***

I would not use the word "rebellion" to talk about this. If we want the world to change, I prefer to speak of "mutation." If we want to transform reality, we begin with ourselves. We do not ask the world to change, and we do not fight against society. It has to be us ourselves who affirm our own values.

***Religion and custom integrate us into a group that shapes our personality. Perhaps other traditions are better than the one that we were born into? Does it make sense to change religion?***

No, it does not make sense. To go from one tradition to another does not have a true effect, because one god is equal to the other. It is another caricature, another limitation. It is necessary to rise above the limitation in order to be open to life. The age we are living in has to stop being religious so it can be mystical. There will be a moment when all human beings on the planet possess the same mystical feeling and leave religions aside. I do not believe either that any religion is better than another.

## II

### ***How do we take the “what will they say about us?”***

There are two positions: one that asks “what will they say” and another that concerns itself with “what will I say about myself.” A barbarian psychology can live in the “what will they say,” but a person who has a higher level of consciousness would say, “This is what I want from myself, precisely because I am conscious.”

Now distinct levels of consciousness exist. The first is an animal level that thinks, “What I have, I have.” One can see these people on the street: mercenaries, thieves, assassins. Above this level is the infantile level in which everything is a superficial game; in this state there is no consciousness of infinity or eternity, of death or the universe. Then there is another level of adolescent consciousness where all the solutions of the world are in relationships, in a reduced cell of love; this is the level at which the majority of gossip magazines, television stories, and movies develop. This level serves to find happiness in relationships and all that they entail. But if we go further, we can access an adult level, and there “the other” appears. Even then, both the egoist adult and the adult with social and planetary consciousness exist. The first exploits the weaker or the less intelligent, creates injurious industries or captures political power. This one is harmful. The second understands that the other is much like himself and that he must worry about social and ecological catastrophes, that is to say, the world in which we all live. He knows responsibility.

But on top of all those, there exists a level of cosmic consciousness where the being lives in the whole universe, infinite space, eternal time, permanent impermanence . . . At this level the big themes are found like “know thyself.” And even further beyond that exists another divine consciousness where we know this construct we have named God.

### ***Do you think it is possible to peek into this divine level of consciousness?***

Yes. And to arrive at the conclusion, to begin with, that we have to stop calling on the name of God. We have to stop thinking that God is going to fix everything and saying that if God made everything bad in this universe then we are here to do it, too, again. If there is a God, we are here to help him. This requires that we take possession of the world and of ourselves. We must do what we want to do with full consciousness and with full responsibility. In this level of divine consciousness, we find true art.

### ***Without the development of the personality, is it possible to access higher levels of consciousness?***

Sometimes, the development of consciousness coincides with the development of the personality, but not always. Each case is different. Once I went to see Vittorio Gassman. He was suffering a deep depression, although he was a well-known artist. Upon doing his genealogy tree, I saw that his mother wanted him to be an actor. He didn't want that, and he paid with his pain. He got sick and suffered from depression. He was famous, but this vocation didn't serve him at all. I recommended many things: I told him to go to his mother's grave, to kill a rooster and to cover the tomb with blood, that

he spread blood on the penis and penetrate his mother with fury. He told me that if he were someone other than Vittorio Gassman he would do it, but being who he was, he could not. Two years later, he died. I had not told this before, but it is a good example to show what one can achieve in obeying others, including having success; but if you are not happy, nothing works.

***Do we obey other people's predictions permanently, without being ourselves?***

The brain has a tendency to guide itself by predictions. It's important to take care not to fall into this.

***You usually speak of people's capacity to program even their own death. Are there those who are convinced that they are going to die at a certain age and accomplish it?***

That's how it is, yes. The brain programs itself, imitating at times the age of the death of a family member or some famous person.

### III

***Are we children disguised as adults?***

We are the elderly disguised as children; we are the ancient ones. In our skin there are millions of cells, each with a complex memory.

***It's said that we should not stop ourselves from carrying out life's movie . . . but that is not so easy.***

Many people effectively stop carrying out what you call "life's movie." The majority of people want to be like others, and this drives them to a death in life. It is necessary to find what distinguishes us from others in order to be something. To the extent that we try to be like others, we convert ourselves into zombies.

***Often, young people yearn to live the life of another, to live through what others experience . . .***

When I began my studies of Psychomagic, I met different teachers. One of them was Oscar Ichazo, who told me one day, "You are going to imitate me for some time, because I have given you knowledge that you did not have: I have marked your virgin soul." The soul imitates for a while what it has awakened to, and this lasts a short period if one is conscious and a long period if the person is naive.

***To live a full life, do you think a reconciliation with parents is necessary?***

For me, it was enriching to meet Gregorio "Goyo" Cárdenas Hernández, a serial criminal who killed seventeen women and buried them in his garden. For ten years he was in a mental hospital, and then he became an attorney and made a family. I first learned about him in the newspaper, *El Herald*. I met him drinking coffee. He was very courteous. I asked him how it all happened, and he told me he had already forgotten all of it because it had been another person who had done it.

He was sincere because I believe that we can live many lives in this same life, in the same person and in the same brain. Surrender exists. He paid for his crimes and redeemed himself. The value that Goyo Cárdenas later showed was already inside of him even when he was a criminal. He was an angel in a deviant personality. When the deviant personality dissolved, his angel appeared. I think the same thing occurs with the family: it hurts us, it is like a trap, it shortens our life, it bothers us psychically and socioculturally, it forces us into a limited level of consciousness, it robs us of our essential self, it inculcates ideas in us that are not our own, and at the moment when we find ourselves in the world, all of this collapses and we have to build a life from scratch. We forgive ourselves because no one is guilty. Generation after generation, each one is victim to the one before. We end up with many centuries of being victims, but in the end you understand that there is no reason for resentment.

I began to think that my parents were to blame for my birth. I thought that in giving me life they gave me death. I blamed them for many things, but then I understood the Buddhist phrase that said, “The truth is what is useful.” Then I began to wonder, and I told myself, “I was something before birth, and I chose my parents because I needed them as a school. The limitations they gave me are what made me, and I am what I am thanks to them.” There are marvelous fruits from twisted trees.

***Do you believe it is necessary to “kill the father,” as Freud asserts?***

The symbolic act of the death of the father is absolutely necessary, but it is also necessary to do it in an intelligent way, with lucidity and without resentment. If you perceive your father in a violent way, it is because you are not killing him: you are asking him to love you because you need it. But if you are able to see him positively, without his pedestal and without your fear, you are no longer begging him to love you in order for you to exist. And this is when you kill him, when you make him fall. But once you’ve knocked him down, it is necessary to rebuild him and repay him, because fathers have essential value, even if they are monsters: they give us life, they leave their imprint on certain parts of our being, and they allow us to become who we are in a conscious way.

With the father, we must apply a maxim of operative magic, which is “Dissolve and Coagulate.” To be able to improve yourself, it is necessary to first dissolve yourself, to put everything in its place and observe it intellectually, physically, and sexually in order to see who you are. And then it is necessary to coagulate it, to remake it in your interior, as you want it to be. It is necessary to achieve an inner work and, once you make all of this better, recover the father by absorbing his values.

***Is cruelty in some children and preadolescents a frustrated creation? Are they guilty for what they do?***

There is no blame. What you call cruelty is really unconsciousness. A child is not cruel unless he is sick. The family psyche is reproduced in the child’s behavior, like dogs. He is ignorant and copies his environment. There are parents who act like gurus. When a child is racist, it is not the child who is racist, it is the parent who is. If a child kills another child, the parents are the criminals. The child, in this case, is possessed. We cannot speak of childish evil. Children are not cruel; that is a myth. Children are only unconscious and ignorant; they do not know. They reproduce the conduct of adults.

***You have written that family wounds never completely heal.***

True. I believe that the human being has animal channels but also vegetable channels. The animal has cells that heal and close his wounds. However, if you cut a branch, it is not going to grow again. A vegetable wound is forever, and the only thing we can do is cover it. This is why we find hollow trees; they produce mushrooms that nourish the trunk. Our heart behaves, in this sense, like a vegetable. If you make a wound, it never heals; there it remains. What could happen is that new experiences come, covering this wound.

I cannot console myself about the death of one of my sons, although many years have passed, and I continue hurting. While I have a happy life together with his memory, comfort does not exist. I have had the strength to create, along with this discomfort, other loves, other works, other satisfactions. I can live with the wounds.

### ***What parts do friends and other traveling companions play in our lives?***

I had two friends in childhood that I have reproduced throughout my life through other people and circumstances. Friends are, in this sense, like family: They are always there. They are generational. We are all traveling together in the same airplane; we are passengers on the same train. They are very important because we are gregarious beings and not wolf men. I consider friendship fundamental, and I mix in groups. To know whether or not a friendship will enrich us, it is necessary to know why we are cultivating it. To be friends means to create something together.

### ***Is youth full of prejudices that are smoothed out with time?***

One does not age and the curtain drops, at least not in my experience. The child always stays, the adolescent stays, the youth stays, the adult stays . . . As one grows, she converts into a group of beings, and the personalities add up, because where there is continuity there is no separation.

Throughout life, prejudices are not fixed, but beliefs are. I remember that at thirty years old I did something fundamental: I took a notebook and told myself, "I am going to write down all the ideas I have in my mind. What do I believe in?" I wrote it, I did it to pick the ideas off, like fleas. And then I told myself, "These ideas are not me; they may end up being useful, but they are not me."

A young person sometimes believes that whatever he thinks *is* him, just as one sometimes thinks his car is him or his shoes are him. But ideas are like shirts. They are not yourself. In youth, one can make a mistake, but as time goes by the errors dissolve and what is important stays, the essential being.

### ***During the early teens, the first music or media idols appear. Are they necessary or limiting to our development?***

They are necessary for some. I did not have idols, but I became very good friends with the poet Nicanor Parra, who was fundamental for our group and older than us. At times we need teachers or guides, although in my case the truth is that only art saved me. I was an artist. I had to make my name and my work and, therefore, I could not devote myself 100 percent to other people or other works. Although, yes, I sought teachers and visited teachers.

***I am not referring only to those called spiritual teachers but to the media idols, to those that so***

*many young people want to be like.*

I never got there, thankfully. For some people they are necessary because we lack mythologies, and the brain responds to unconscious mythology. For this reason, sadly, Hollywood actors have replaced pagan gods. Football players or singers are also part of the phenomenon. They have their roles and in certain moments they are helpful, but they are not necessary nor do we have an obligation to hold on to them.

*How should one teach a child or one of your own offspring how to understand life?*

I would have to ask my family. I brought my son Cristóbal, at eight years old, to witness an operation with Pachita, and I encouraged him to put a finger in the wound, to see what one would look like with holes in the head, to know how to change a lung . . . At this same age I took him to receive a massage from a guru. Cristóbal grew up with a group of shamans. I did everything I could do for him: I would need a whole book to tell it. I eliminated the word “father” so that this monolith would not exist. He never called me dad but Alejandro. I never imposed a particular style of dress. And I did that with all my kids. When we passed by a toy store and they trembled, I told them, “Go in and buy whatever you want.” They came back with only little toys. But once, my son Adan appeared with a life-size stuffed horse. The whole store looked at him, but I bought it for him. I gave them a very conscious upbringing, very correct. But children always commit errors, many errors. I gave one of them three lashes and later, when he was fifteen, I made him give them back to me. He had urinated in front of the couch. While I was hitting him, I told him, “This is a formal punishment, but I do not do it because I am angry.” He never forgave me. So, in a family ceremony, he gave me back the lashes.



## THE INVISIBLE BRIDGE

### I

#### *To what can we aspire in this life?*

To many things. But, above all, a long life. For this, we need to work in a job that we like and always be peaceful people, to do what we like. We must be what we are and not what they want us to be. To love what we love without obligation, without neurotic knots that we cannot untie. To desire what we want and to create what we are capable of making.

To live with a certain prosperity, without wasting. But a prosperity for everyone, not a prosperity based on exploiting others. And, of course, it is necessary to become immortals and, for this, we have to live as if we were immortals, thinking that we have a thousand years more to do what we want but without forgetting that in ten seconds we can die.

#### *In many schools, wisdom is obtained through pleasure, happiness, the prohibited; in others, through asceticism, penance, surrender, and sacrifice. Do they all go to the same place?*

All are roads to finding oneself. Now, all these paths must be taken with the greatest dignity, because we are mortals. We are not eternal, and our present state is going to end. Life defeats us every moment. Even if we are Titans, we are defeated. Knowing this, we can work more calmly, with humility. It's about attaining holiness, resolving to get to that. Happiness does not have to do with having things but being happy with life. One can lose the battle while yet in the womb, because we can become neurotic fetuses if the mother doesn't want us. In this case, recovering the happiness in life is something magnificent that allows our union with the universe in its totality, with time and with space, with consciousness in its totality. It is a state of constant euphoric trance in the body, possible because we are little treasure chests, containing an immensity that, at the same time, is in the smallest of our cells.

#### *One can arrive by many roads to this state of euphoria for living?*

Yes, but not by whatever manner. I began through art. I did avant-garde theater, poetry, scandal, all of it. Then I practiced meditation. Hours meditating, time, everything contrary to what I had done; but always moved by a constant attention, by a constant desire of curiosity and of knowing without fear. This is audacity. It is the secret of life.

#### *Beyond imagining—playing with the mind in order to not be prisoners of reality—the objective*

***is to change ourselves and, more precisely, to cure ourselves?***

You talk about the mind, but ever since I discovered the tarot, I talk about a minimum of four centers of the human being: intellectual, emotional, sexual, and physical. It is not only the mind that plays this juggling act; the emotional center, the sexual center, and the physical also act. It is necessary to know oneself and to observe. For example: The intellectual center wants to be and *becomes* in silence. The emotional center wants to love and arrives at loving through indifference. The sexual center wants to create and arrives at creating by learning to fail. The physical center wants to live and lives by learning to die.

***If the life that surrounds us and the world that we live in are mental constructions, why can't we exit them by our will, when we need to, to mark distance and to make a break in the road?***

Yes, we can leave it all by will, but this demands bravery and strength on our part. Meditation is one of the possible ways.

***At what point does our freedom consist of knowing and assuming that our destiny is already written?***

I cannot say that the future is written. My rules tell me that when you ask me about a possible future you are already showing your limitations, thinking there is only one possible future. If I open my mind to this theme and accept that there is a future, I must recognize that there are infinite possible futures that I can choose, because at each moment a different possibility opens before me. I construct my future through my choices.

***Then, we cannot see our destiny in a lineal or spatial way?***

No, I see it like a fan or a matrix of possible futures. That is to say, we can construct our destiny but we cannot create our destiny. There are ten thousand paths, and all of them are in view. I can go with one of the ten thousand paths, but I cannot invent a ten thousand first.

***Then what is freedom based on?***

Inner freedom consists in being able to choose freely one of the ten thousand paths, using what we have called free will. And if you have a destiny because you project a genealogy tree into the future, then the future tends to repeat the past, and it is from this that we have to free ourselves. We have to have futures distinct from the past and seek to become ourselves.

***Your ideas could be described as mutacionistas. Are we mutants?***

We all are. There are many things that we do not understand because our bodies are still developing. Recently I spoke with a doctor who told me that the pineal gland was an atrophied gland. I replied to him that the human being is an animal in evolution and cannot have anything in him atrophied. The pineal gland could be—why not?—the seed of an organ that is developing and evolving into a fourth brain. He changed his scientific view a few hours before he was to present a paper at a scientific

conference in Los Angeles. I explained to him that nothing is atrophied; in fact, you could say exactly the opposite, and that appears more logical to me. We are developing something new from this gland . . . there are things we do not understand because we are like chimpanzees . . .

***What sense does it make that we cannot now understand something we are destined to discover?***

We cannot imagine the eternal. We cannot conceive of it. And if we cannot understand the universe, we are ignorant and limited. You ask me about the sense of all this, but surely it is our descendants who will be able to understand it. We are here to produce descendants who can understand it. We are here to produce descendants who will use the same brain that we already have but be more evolved. If the reptilian brain evolved into our three human brains, I sincerely believe that we are creating a fourth brain—and it doesn't have to be material.

In the Middle Ages they intuited this. They painted the fourth brain in the form of a halo because that's how they saw it, as a golden circle around the head. What reason is there for painting a halo? Why would they invent a halo? Well, because the halo is real.

## II

***What advice could you give to a seeker of knowledge, to someone who is looking for himself?***

I began with meditating. But before that I looked for people who had a more elevated consciousness than mine, though I did not go to pay homage nor become a disciple. I put myself in contact with those whom I thought were interesting. The error that I committed was to make friends with a teacher, because then you do not accept the exchange or the lesson. With friendship you unbalance the levels of consciousness between people. But by knowing these people, my level of consciousness rose, and I learned a lot until I arrived at what I considered valid. When you get to a level that you value as important, you can and should devote yourself to others in order that they learn with you.

***From all your experiences with knowledge—psychoanalysis, shamanism, taking substances, meditation—what would stay with you?***

The most resounding exercise to which I have dedicated myself for years is to suspend thought. To succeed at not letting even one word enter my brain.

Once I achieved that, even the thought that I was able to stop all thought left my head. This has been the most difficult.

Also, to practice meditation was for me very important, although my path has been more to do with artistic creation.

***Do you advise against the rational paths like philosophy or the study of science?***

I do not advise against; I believe that all these paths are also good. Philosophy made me pose questions for myself that later I had to resolve by way of other disciplines.

## ***Are the higher levels of consciousness found in people or in groups?***

It is difficult to belong to a group, because established groups create dependencies. If we speak with the common sense that characterizes us, we must speak of the large group of humanity, all of humankind. Fortunately, it's been a while since I quit being picky about my clientele. Every Wednesday I meet those who want to come to a café, and I can read the tarot. At a certain age, you have to make yourself useful for others. When you have lived and life has given you an experience, whether good or bad, the moment arrives when you should pass on what you know.

Rather than turn into a dumb old person, you should go further every time. Aging does not exist, neither does mental decline. The memory can have less capacity to find a word or maybe you can feel less sexual desire, less virulence, but there is no reason for desire to have disappeared. If, during your life you have worked the emotions, when you mature you begin to know sublime feelings, which you did not have when you were young because nature did not let you. It takes forty years to find yourself. The true opening of the consciousness cannot be had before this age. From there, the journey begins.

## ***You indicate that contemplation is the technique that perfects all these things. What is contemplation to you?***

In meditation, you immobilize yourself and dedicate your attention to what happens inside you, as if you were seated at the edge of the river seeing things pass by. And contemplation is the same—but you're swimming in the river. That is to say, you are seeing what happens to you, but you are in the depths of life, acting.

## ***What does “to be possessed by the spirit of the teacher” mean?***

Our brain is broad and infinite. In the same way that it produces the personality we have, it can produce others. That is to say, we learn to build our personality. Schizophrenics can have thirty personalities and even more. When you are going to see a teacher, you see another human being that has a higher level of consciousness than yours. What happens? You pursue this level of consciousness; your brain pursues it. So your brain grasps this level and reproduces it in your person, but because it's the first time you see it in yourself, you identify it with the teacher, with her ego, with her character. And the brain, instead of acting as if it had your form, gives you the form of the other: it makes you feel like you have the body of another, the personality of another, the apparent individuality of another.

This produces an imitation, and I believe this is what you refer to when you say “to be possessed by the spirit of the teacher.” It is not that the teacher is inside you but that there is an imitation of a level of consciousness that you are considering superior to yours.

## ***And the teacher who believes herself to be the chosen one?***

Well, on the path of the evolution of consciousness there are traps. I explained this in my book *Los Evangelios para sanar* [Gospels for Healing]. In reality you are a path. Your brain is a path on which all gods walk. If on a path I see a god and I believe myself a god, I have fallen into the trap of the guru. In reality, we are the path where things are passing, we are not the passersby.

### ***What are initiation tests?***

In Castaneda's words, challenges. Here's a way to think about them. We observe some traumas: A woman is raped and this destroys her life. Another woman is raped, she bathes, she cleans herself, she cries, she recovers, she decides that she is never going to talk about that again, and she continues with her life. The same thing happens in war: some people stay hurt forever, yet others become stronger. The point is that traumas do not produce illnesses; traumas are the detonators. There is latent illness inside us that the trauma makes explode.

And as far as initiation tests, they consist of the following: You have a level of consciousness, and you are faced with an event. You have to react in a useful way and advance. The test is a challenge for you to evolve.

### ***And sacrifice: is it a masochistic trap?***

That's right. Religions have confused us. In our culture, the sky is not on earth, it is not within your reach. You have to attain the beyond by suffering in life, and the church tells you that suffering will make you rich and powerful.

### ***Why are we afraid when we get close to archetypes by way of dreams, the imagination, or hallucinogenic substances?***

The masses, people in general, only change their level of consciousness when they are in serious trouble, like, for example, following a natural disaster or terrorism. The masses are afraid of archetypes because archetypes are contained in higher levels of consciousness, and this produces fear in people who do not want to change. Each time we confront archetypes, we are confronting the dissolution of identity.

## **III**

### ***Have we built an invisible skin that we call ego?***

No, the skin is not the ego. We are habituated to think that it is like that, but it's not true. Let's look deeper: Imagine the lion out roaming his territory. When he senses that some prey has entered his territory, he pounces. Also, there are plants whose perception reaches thousands of kilometers, birds that manage formidable distances in flight, or organisms that allow themselves to be felt very far away. And man? Well, through telepathy the human being can go around the world. Man has no limits.

### ***So, what would be the ego?***

Many times one speaks of the ego without understanding it. In reality, we have our essential being and another acquired part that permits an identification or an identity. This last one is the ego, an acquired identity, which is at the service of the essence. The ego can degenerate into diverted personalities, schizophrenics, or paranoids because it is the ego that notices the traumas and blows of life.

***You admit that, for years, you had a gigantic ego. What can a person do in our world without an ego?***

The ego is deaf. Deaf and blind. The ego has been tamed. This is the core in the Hindu doctrine. The ego must bend to the essence. In social activities, the biggest egos develop, like in the university where a person talks and talks even though no one is paying attention and no one ever listens. With this type of person there is no dialogue, only a long monologue. Life requires us to enter into dialogue and to listen to others. The ego is necessary like the shell of an egg: it envelopes the essence. All this about “kill the ego” is the craziness of gurus who, of course, are huge egomaniacs. I remember Osho (Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh) who, in spite of being an extremely intelligent person, made his followers put his face on their T-shirts. In each of his books there were fifteen or twenty photos of his body. The ego can convert itself into something delirious. This man spent his life fighting against the ego and, in so doing, did nothing but strengthen his own. He confronted the egos of others but never his own. I look at the gurus like clowns. They are necessary, but they are big paper dolls.

***Are we slaves of our desires?***

We are always desiring things: more money, more objects. The world is pure desire. We get it in our heads that we have to resist aging: thousands of commercials encourage us to thicken our lips, lift our tits, stretch our dicks, firm our butts. We desire and we desire whatever we see in the advertisements or on the street. Every time I connect to the Internet, I’m sure to get four propositions: lengthen my phallus, lose weight, buy prostitutes, and win a fortune without working . . . or imaginary banks appear where you win millions. This is a serious problem with our society: it is full of desires to consume and to show off, but there is very little desire to *be*.

***We should learn then, as you have told us so many times, to defeat desire?***

The oriental schools pass on a very old wisdom that should be revised. They have greatly idealized the teachings of Buddha, and one must be careful. The legend of Buddha, if one looks at it well, is quite grim: a young rich kid abandons his wife and child to be carefree; he was someone who feared the most natural things in the world like death, old age, illness, poverty . . . But, of course, that doctrine assumes that the liberation of desire grants salvation, that salvation cannot come through rebirth, because it believes only in the rebirth or the pilgrimage of the soul—now that’s a lot to suppose, and it could be untrue.

If I do not believe in reincarnation, Buddha fails me. For him, it is necessary to escape from this life in order to not be reincarnated again, and this is an error. It is not necessary to escape from anything. It is necessary to live life. I do not know if reincarnation exists—we cannot know that. We cannot establish doctrines in which I must believe, communicating things by saying let’s stop the wheel on reincarnation, karma, and so forth. They are suspicious beliefs. In no way do I use them. Well studied, they are toxins for everyone.

## IV

***I would like to ask you about death . . .***

What is death? Only a change, a mutation. We do not have death, but rather the change it assumes.

***Where did you learn this?***

(*Laughter.*) Death is a word, and I began to learn it with the tarot. Death is Arcana XIII, and it does not have a name. It is situated in the middle of the deck. I had realized that once I was fifteen years old, I disappeared. Then I was thirty years old, then forty years old, and I continued disappearing. Right now I am seventy-four, and I am another person, yet I continue, content. When I am ninety I will be happy, when I am one hundred years old I will continue to be content. When I am three hundred, I will be stupendous, when I am a million years old, I will be a party.

***Do you believe something of us stays when we die?***

They asked a Zen master, “What is after death?” And he said, “I do not know. I still have not yet died.” I am here. But I know that what I am continues.

The Chariot tarot is sunken into the earth. Where is it going? The earth moves it and displaces it. We advance with the universe. What do I care about “after”? It was never important to me how I would be at eighty years old or a hundred or a million or sixty million. What is important is to know who I am now, not where I am going.

When you begin little by little to lose your identity, to become a generic human, you stop seeing yourself being any certain age. Then you stop identifying with time in general. Later, you are no longer a clear native of a motherland nor a speaker of a certain language. You do not see yourself in your name, you do not confuse yourself with the things you own, you begin to stop the identification.

***But where do we stand in this vision of ourselves?***

You hold on tight to who you are. To the happiness of life. You are happier every day, and you do not need the rigid costume of the character or of the personality. You are fluid, like water. Lao-tzu says, “One must be like water and take the shape of the vase that holds it.” Go through life taking shapes and this is magnificent. There is a moment when you accept it, and you tell yourself, “What I am is disappearing.” And once you are conscious, you are there all the time. You feel in your heels an abyss of total emptiness, and you go on advancing, like a light. And this light that you are knows it is going to swallow the abyss. This hope exists that you dissolve with an infinite joy into the cosmic ocean, and you are you, but you always accept that you are giving way to your consciousness. The ultimate gift you give is your consciousness.

When you arrive at death, the best you can offer is a perfect and enlightened consciousness, a clear consciousness, and that you must create, because if not, as Gurdjieff said, you die like a dog without offering consciousness and without building a soul.

***It is said that power is locked between the walls of the skull. But where would you place consciousness?***

Outside of the body. The body is like the stone of a peach, however, the consciousness does not have limits and it is in constant expansion.

***You suggest that by an effort of the imagination we can free ourselves from the obvious, in the same way listening to music and playing with the memory could transfer us to another place. However, it is not enough to play with a handful of images, we must change to improve, change the subjects we imagine, isn't that right?***

There is a kind of imagination that is almost industrial: this is delusion. One must not confuse the imagination with constant delusions. I can imagine myself as whatever I want to all the time without going into any depth at all: stories and stories and stories without any deeper meaning. Or we can, like Kafka, submerge ourselves to a certain level, then stand still. He never achieved happiness. He rooted himself in neurosis.

***Strength is always necessary, but why is this constant effort of existence demanded of us?***

In life it is necessary to always be alert but not tense. I observed that when you say "strength" you feel it like something unpleasant, but I do not believe it necessary to make things detestable when we could make them likable. When I speak of "strength" I speak of agreeable strength: to paint, to dance, to live, these are totally pleasant strengths. We should do what pleases us in life and try very hard at it.

***Life is a test, a trial?***

No. Life is an initiation school. Or as Castaneda said: a challenge. For the warrior, this is important.

***Is it at all useful to theorize about life?***

He who theorizes about life does so because he knows nothing about life. But he who knows life should communicate his experiences, teach what he has lived.

***We return once more to the old and obstinate question: why does what exists exist?***

A woman who was very sick from cancer called me from the hospital and asked me, "What is the purpose of life?" I thought. And I responded with what she hoped, "Life doesn't make sense." She sighed and said, "This is what I hoped to hear." The next day, she died. I answered like that to console her because this woman could not be cured. Although I believe life does make sense, we do not have to know what that sense is. It is a mystery. The idea that all things have a purpose is very idealistic. Of course we have an end, but we do not know what it is. If this were not so, I would not be here. We have a purpose as humanity in the universe. We have a destiny, however we do not have to know it rationally. And it is necessary to accept this in the healthiest way possible. To convert our planet into a garden. Enrich it and enrich ourselves.

***What does it mean to be yourself? Can we ever know who we are?***

Knowing yourself really means that you are the universe. I do not have limits because I am united with the universe like an organism: time is my life, what happens is my life and is life. If I know

myself, I am the actor and the spectator: the known and the knower at the same time. Up to a certain point I can go from actor to spectator, but there is a supreme moment in which the actor and the spectator melt together. This is not just knowledge; it is pure consciousness, a state of knowing.

***What does it mean to be realized through the transpersonal? Hasn't this word been overused?***

It is not hot air; it is simply a useful construct. What we understand to be personal corresponds with the attitude of enclosing yourself in your own psychology and analyzing everything from your own perspective. The transpersonal means to accept that the other exists, and to keep that in mind when perceiving the world and figuring things out.

In this sense, the transpersonal transcends the boundaries. We would have to, on this path, get to the androgynous thought. If you were a common person, you would be thinking first as a Spaniard, then as a man, then as an earthling. The ideal is to think without nationality, without sexual definition, and without being deformed by the solar system.

***Can we believe that one day we can fulfill ourselves?***

This is a trap, because no one fulfills himself fully. What is fulfilling oneself? Advancing as one can. For example, today, all day, I have written for *Los Technopadres*, a series presented as a comic strip, which I love. I am happy because I like the scene I invented. I am euphoric because I am creating. Although it will be a story for children or for young people, it fascinates me. And each morning I write a poem of four or five lines—I do not have time for more. These are little things that I do and that I like:

*Abandoned room  
ownerless home  
emptiness lies in wait  
under my words.*

*Like a blind man  
who would find  
a treasure in the garbage  
I let winter pass.*

*Do not thank me.  
What I have given you  
was given to me  
for only you.*

*I do not want you to love me,*

*I want you to love:  
flames are ownerless.*

***Hearing that, I have the impression that our happiness comes from looking at the world in a certain way.***

It is not a question of perception. It's about being yourself. When you advance, you perceive yourself in your totality. It does not have to do with defining reality. If we say, "I would like to know," we are projecting the illusion of having an *I* and, further, that we can know it. I don't have anything to do with that. Since classic antiquity, we've honored the expression "Know thyself," but it is really confusing. People think that it is similar to going looking for something. But when we say "know thyself," this "thyself" is really the universe. The universe knows itself. "Know me," says the universe. In the voice of God, know yourself means: know me. But be careful with this: do not think, "You are me, and I am you." In truth, "You are not me, but I am you."

***The greatest teachers say we have to learn to die in peace. But to do that, is all of this journey necessary?***

Yes, of course. The purpose of life is to learn to die in peace, "play dying," say the Chinese. But to die is to enter into a process, like when childhood slowly passes into puberty: the hair, the hormones . . . You live as a change. You move forward in life, and old age begins, which is another period. The hair begins to turn white, the teeth yellow. If you fight against old age, you age with anxiety. If you fight against puberty, you traumatize yourself. At a given moment, we all enter into a process of death, which we can and should live exactly as all the earlier changes.

Death is nothing more than a state. No one is dead! No one dies! We all enter into a process of death, and it is marvelous to accept it with the same tranquility as when we enter into puberty or into maturity.

# TWELVE



## VISIONS

### I

***What do you think of the intermediaries of the soul? Of those who have organized themselves in order to teach us the mysteries of life?***

Ultimately, I have divided the world—although these divisions are arbitrary—into beings and paper dolls. The word “paper doll,” which has stuck to my tongue, helps me to distinguish all the mental constructs. There are, of course, useful paper dolls and useless paper dolls. And the usefulness of either varies according to the passage of time or a change in our particular circumstances. At a certain moment, a formerly useless paper doll can become useful.

The useful paper doll is one that leads us to necessary mutations. The monks, due to living in celibacy, are not worthy of faith. If everyone was a priest, the human race would end. In this sense, they are no good. It is not possible to carry God inside you or communicate to others from a life that goes against human nature.

When these monks organize themselves into sects, other problems arise.

***I suppose they try to monopolize what they call truth?***

Sects could be useful. The problem is, effectively, that their reality consists in taking control of God. They make God their private property. Then they declare that whoever does not participate in the sect is unfaithful, worthy of destruction. They are separators. They do not unite. I believe that in the future the temples will be multipurpose. There will be cathedrals where they celebrate all the cults with free access and absolute compatibility. Subsequently the names of the gods will be removed; there will be anonymous organizations. If you give a name to God, you are appropriating him.

Religion, the same as a Constitution, should be revised because as man changes, religion has to change. The sect uses prohibitions. What man does not know, he calls God: it is a form of superstition. As the brain evolves, blind beliefs and taboos crumble.

***How does this affect what you call “health”?***

We have to be very conscious of the fact that beneath every illness is a prohibition. A prohibition that comes from a superstition.

***Therefore, you do not recommend any church?***

No, not even temples of the Zen masters, which are now Spanish, American, Mexican. They are paper dolls imitating traditions, languages, and Japanese food.

***But the sects own interesting techniques and knowledge.***

Of course. But these techniques and knowledge can be acquired without all the circus. When Ejo Takata introduced me to the Zen rod, I gave it back saying, “I am not a Zen master. Don’t give me this. I am never going to be a master, nor am I going to hold anyone up; this is a great honor, but my way is another.”

***What sense does it make that humanity has produced beings such as Jesus or Buddha?***

When you say Jesus and Buddha, you are talking of beings that, for me, are imaginary. It is as if you said Don Quixote or Hamlet. The same. But it doesn’t matter that they are imaginary. What is important is the quality of the message, which is marvelous.

***In a way, they are there; they can almost be touched.***

They are there, mythical, but now we are speaking about human beings. We do not know if some human beings have received the revelation. We will never know if the saint is crazy or if he has hallucinations.

***And of the apparitions or revelations, what is your opinion?***

To see apparitions of the Virgin does not interest me. It does not prove anything to me. To see a little smiling transparent girl climb a tree is to me the same as seeing a gorilla climb a tree. It is as peculiar as that. It has no benefit whatsoever.

***And what explanation do you give to these phenomena?***

They take place because people yearn for them to exist. It’s like a collective hallucination. Jung said that flying saucers are a product of the collective unconscious. They are collective dreams.

***Why do we have the feeling that religions are traps for the soul?***

Religions become traps when they set up boundaries. Divinity has no name or nationality and is for everyone. Religion comes to segment mystical reality. Ultimately you feel the limits of each religion, and these become traps. On the other hand, for centuries sacred books have been interpreted in an aberrant way by monks for whom woman is the devil, and they end up infecting the holy texts with their off-the-track interpretations. Then the same occurs in schools, in politics, in society—and it ends up creating oppression. Religion, which should be the universal panacea, becomes a universal poison—all religions.

***You studied the Kabbalah, which, besides having religious significance, is a language.***

Yes, a language that produces a bunch of crazies: in Hebrew each letter has a numerical value, and each word that you read equals the value of the letters in the word added up to a definite number. So you have combinations, and you say, “The number 87 is moon (*levanah*, in Hebrew) but also the word carrion (*nevelah*) equals 87, then moon and carrion could be the same.” It is a crazy system; the Kabbalah makes you crazy. We are adults. We do not need to believe in fairy tales. We cannot say that a book was written by God. We cannot say that the Bible, the sacred book, is the divine word. We can say that it is a novel, a work of art. And languages are works of art. But all of them, not only Hebrew or Sanskrit. I can play with all languages in the same way.

### ***What relationship have you had with Sufism?***

In Sufism, when you know it, you discover great beauties. It is like the cream of Islam. It is a deep mysticism, but they are prisoners of the Qur’an.

### ***Even though Shams-i-Tabriz or Jalaluddin Rumi were very free souls . . .***

I decided to heal, to be conscious of the illnesses that come with their books. Behind every illness there is a book, be it the Qu’ran, the gospels, the Old Testament, Buddhist sutras . . . All books, if they are interpreted through fanaticism, produce illnesses. We must reinterpret all those texts and take them for what they are: works of art. The Bible, for example, is a marvelous novel.

### ***All beliefs establish metaphors to explain life, but the explanation of what happens to us continues to be a mystery. This lack of understanding, at times, takes us on nonsensical journeys. Do you believe God is a gambler?***

It is an interesting intellectual game to talk about God and to think of it as a being that plays, that has attributes, that gets bored, and that defies that boredom by rolling dice. When Moses Maimonides wrote his book *The Guide of the Perplexed*, it took him three volumes to try to define God—and he arrived at the conclusion that God is that of which nothing can be said. God is the unimaginable, the immeasurable. And I add that God is the unlovable, because how are you going to love what you do not know? I like the idea of the game, but I believe it is not he who is playing it. It is the human being who plays: it is humanity who plays. Johan Huizinga wrote a book called *Homo Ludens*, which is an analysis of man as a being who plays. Man is a being who plays and builds illusions in his likeness. So man has imagined a God who plays.

### ***What do you have faith in?***

When Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa was asked if he believed in God, he said no. “How is it possible that such a great mystic does not believe in God?” they said. “I do not believe because I know it,” Ramakrishna replied. I do not believe in the concept of “faith”; I believe in knowledge.

### ***Do you know?***

There are things that I know, yes. The dumb know not, but believe they know.

## ***What does the concept “civil saint” mean to you? Who can be this?***

I am a person who has suggested to myself to do good, simply. It is not that I have succeeded, but I have suggested it. Besides, to earn my living or to have children and a wife, like we all can, I have suggested to myself to do good insofar as I exist in a civil society. The civil saint could be someone who imitates holiness from these positions. No one is really a saint but rather imitates holiness. The saint could be the perfect human being, but the actual human being is still in the process of evolution. Because of this, he is limited to only imitating holiness.

## ***How can we imitate holiness?***

By intuition. The saint hears what he should do. And this comes to us from the interior, from what we call the God within. There is a perception inside of us, something that says, “What is the best in this situation? How can I help my fellow man?”

Sacrifice does not exist to the civil saint; like everyone, he avoids the masochistic sacrifice of the saints and carries out a normal life, integrated in society. But, in addition, he is conscious of the world; he is conscious that his acts have to be healing for others and for himself.

Holiness is not something that belongs to religions, nor does it mean sexual repression. Holiness consists in having a cosmic and divine consciousness. When I spoke of civil holiness, they took me for a madman, but now they are practicing it. It was necessary to speak of civil holiness, and I did. Just as I say that for art to be art it has to cure. And many people have begun practicing it. When you discover an idea and you mention it, sometimes it spreads everywhere. When a flower opens, it is springtime everywhere.

## **II**

## ***Is making policy necessary to develop our consciousness?***

Politicians have a social function. They are our employees; we pay them. We must realize that a president could be our one in charge; the police are dependent on us, like bank tellers and waitresses. Politicians are our servants, not our mistresses.

## ***But one can have a political passion . . .***

I never had it, I always hated politics. I never mixed with these people because, for me, politics had to be metaphysical, mystical, an art. I recommend that politics end; it has become the cancer of society because now it does not mean anything. Actually, a president is not a big deal. The president embodies an old symbol, but behind him are the multinationals, the oil companies, and all that. We could live very well without them, without paper dolls and without politicians. People are learning this, because people see them staging puppet shows or being mimicked by comics and television, and they no longer let it confuse them.

## ***At the same time, you say it is necessary to change the world.***

It is necessary to change it, but not through politics. When I was in Latin America, very celebrated

writers told me to join the party, to take part with the left because otherwise they would inform on me and I would never have literary success. They also told me that if I did not side with the left, I would be considered in favor of the right. “Join and you have literary success! It is what the rest of us have done! If not, you will have us as your enemies,” they clarified. I did not join them because I feel that art is not political. The political should turn itself into art, but not the artist into a politician.

***What could be the utopia for the present age?***

To begin with, I would want all of human order to make a partnership, beginning in schools. It is atrocious that the children leave the partnership and go to be educated by a professor, just a man or a woman. This negates partnership. Classes should be taught by couples of both sexes, and children should be educated by a man and a woman, the same way that it should be a Pope and a Popesse, a president and a *presidenta*, not necessarily husband and wife. This is what I would do as a first political measure to improve social life: all human activities would have to be carried out in complimentary pairs.

***We live alienated by a world that is at the mercy of technology, the market, and money. Is this due to capitalism or is the problem within us?***

If you look carefully, what defines man is not quantity but quality. Humanity has always been qualified by his valence. Another thing is the great multitude, which, at the core, directs the world—the politicians need their votes, and they have to deceive them to legitimize themselves. Our labor is something else; it is to create conscious people. Everything I desire, I desire for others. Work the consciousness, then share it, so that humanity does not sink into catastrophe, because then the multitude will dominate—and the masses have a limited level of consciousness. It is necessary to elevate the level of consciousness: the multitude does not represent the human being. In this sick society, people emerge who are like antibodies; they are called to expand the consciousness, but this is work that must be done through the schools, on the streets, through art, and with every word. For this reason I say that art, not politics, heals.

Entertainment that sedates serves nothing; well, maybe to be able to bear life, right? I amuse myself. Like a little dwarf, I entertain myself with American movies, which serve to dull the brain. But all of this pseudo-art does not change society. Although really society should not change, it should mutate. And, little by little, it is mutating. If you take any mediocre being of today, and you transfer him to the Middle Ages, he would be a genius. We are changing, we are mutating, but the masses do it much more slowly. Society is like the body of a chicken: the chicken’s foot is hard and insensitive while the eye is very alive. And there are beings who embody the cells of the eyes and others who embody the cells of the feet, of the wings, or of the anus.

Although not all human beings have the same function, the collective consciousness is totally necessary. There are, as I said, different levels of consciousness, and this is the most important: the mutation of the level of consciousness. If we had another level of consciousness, humanity would be marvelous. The problem is that the man on the street has an animal, infantile, and romantic level of consciousness, which makes him continue to help those who do not suit him, whether of the political class, the military . . .

In schools and on television they constantly praise war and power. Our history is the history of

battles and impositions. It's the shame of humanity. The military and the police are repressive elements that appear indispensable, but we really could do without them. I suggested in Chile that the military change its uniform to a tutu and learn before anything else to dance classical ballet and then study flower arranging and gardening and fertilize our Chilean desert and turn it into a garden.

### III

***The future is something that is already passing. How do you see the future of our species, this humanity of which you speak?***

I am tired of pessimism; the human race always changes when it is in danger of death. When we start dying in the streets, we will put a stop to pollution and other atrocities. We will react out of necessity.

***It's never too late?***

It's never too late. At the same time as they are perfecting mobile telephones, cars, genetics, and armaments, they are also developing many other things that are good for humanity. The discovery of atomic energy resulted in benefits for medicine and science. The path genetics has taken appears to us now to be monstrous, but it is necessary because we are entering life. We must perfect cloning if we want to evolve and abandon our primate origins. In alchemy, one of the ideas of strength was the homunculus: a created human being. We have to be able to do it. The idea of the purification of the race ruined the desire for man to advance genetically, but we have to obtain a different body because this one does not respond to our spiritual desires.

***But with the disappearance of cultures and species, the destruction of the Amazon . . . the earth cannot return to what it was.***

But we can re-create it with genetics. Thanks to genetics, we are going to recover the animals that we have exterminated. It is not necessary to go against science. I believe scientific advancement is very positive. As in nature: the more we progress through the bad, the more good we do.

***Why do some fear the future?***

Look, an animal is afraid because something can eat him at any moment. For this society to function and not spread anarchism, it has to work the fear. There are various terrors: economic terror (very current); sexual terror (AIDS); the terror of consciousness (when a society begins to think about the death penalty); emotional terror (the war of the sexes); and on and on. Terror is something complex: it makes us build defenses and maintain society without change.

***How do you imagine the world in a few years? What mutations do you see possible?***

I believe that in the future our driving force, our energy, is going to change. The changes of a society are changes in energy. We are all bound to fly! Not to fly like birds, but by discovering an antigravitational force. We cannot conceive a future without defeating gravity. Everything is going to

change. A city is a place with roots, and the cities are going to change. We will live in flying shells. The sky will be populated, the land will be free of streets and roads, and we will not use gasoline. We are going to fly above a marvelous garden populated by all kinds of animals. We are going to live in freedom. We are going to change the human spirit; we are going to change everything!

***Do you think we are directing ourselves toward a world without material limits, toward a spiritualization?***

Yes, and it will be a gradual change. We will not have furniture; we will work with intelligent materials that will undo and recover their shapes; there will be portable robots and healing clothes, which will be able to tell us our body temperature and the state of our health in any given moment; we will have intelligent homes that will function on their own. All this is already evolving, but it has to be perfected. The use of fossil fuels will end: automobiles that run on hydrogen, methane, and compressed air already exist. Pollution will end. Money will evolve toward something immaterial. If we have a new free energy, we are all going to enjoy free time and long life. We are going to develop art and beauty. We will talk singing, maybe, like poets. Telepathy, little by little, will be established as a language. There will be an instantaneous and universal means of communication. Partnerships will improve a lot and will have consciousness. It will not be, as it is now, that some eat and others don't; hunger will disappear. Common man will have to evolve to a new level. We are gorillas, primates. We are still forming, but we are going to fly.

Although there will be many fights and nationalist resistance to preserve the little things, at some point it will stop because it will be useless. How will it end? Thanks to the children. Those sons of nationalism in the future will be communicating with the whole world. Little by little all nationalities are going to intermingle. Languages are going to intermingle. A marvelous future awaits us, after passing through enormous but necessary plagues, so that we don't overwhelm the planet and we don't destroy other species. There will always be illnesses to balance the population. But we will heal ourselves with the mind.

***Are nearly all the species that have accompanied us in evolution condemned to die?***

No. We will re-create them. From the tiger's skin hung on the wall, we will bring out tigers.

***But, will they be real or virtual?***

Real.

***What should we think about genetic experiments?***

Genetics is sacred. It is not necessary to oppose it.

***Do you believe then that one day we will be able to create beauty, like the wing of a butterfly or a flower?***

Of course. We can take a bone or something organic and create an animal: everything is in a cell.

***Re-create but not create . . .***

Well, they will be able to mix animals and species . . .

***Therefore, you think genetic manipulation is a necessity?***

It seems to me essential. Our conscience commits us to experimentation.

***And cloning?***

It is absolutely essential, and it is necessary to experiment thoroughly. There was a time when it did not advance due to religious prejudices, and now it is not advancing because of scientific, economic, and political prejudices . . . We must continue!

***There are those who think cloning can violate a person's fundamental rights.***

Why, if the person wants it?

***I speak from the point of view of those who are born cloned. They can create a hundred copies of a human to be used as organ donors or slaves.***

Goethe wrote *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, and two thousand young people committed suicide. So there were those who said, "Why did he have to write it? One should not write such things." Thus arose censorship, derived from suppositions of this kind. But, following the same reasoning, we should also burn the Bible, because it has caused more deaths than the atomic bomb, or all of the Buddhist texts because of self-immolation. Everything has a danger, always. But just because this danger exists, we are not going to prevent things from following their course. Just as danger exists in creating armies of zombies, the possibility exists of making another exceptional humanity, with long life: a mutation of humanity toward something infinitely better than what we are now. This is the path.

***Nonetheless, if we analyze history, whenever there was an effort to make the species better, very grave phenomena were produced: Nazism, for example.***

But in this case, the aim was racial selection with domination being the goal. It was not genetic, it was not work on the fetus or on the cells, or anything of this nature. Those were dreams of the age, motivated by the desire of a superior race to dominate other races. But what I am speaking about is a superior humanity, not a superior race. From that point of view, let genetics be admitted. You see how there are barriers that impede our moving toward the truth? We remain stuck in the idea that genetics carries the risk of another führer. Let's change the concept: let's create a superior humanity and accept genetics.

***Do you think in the future we will have a virtual world, like they are drawing on the Internet?***

No. The root of the virtual is the real. Because of this, the virtual world will always dissolve into the real.

***Do you think that religion, as we understand it, will be a thing of the past?***

Of course, a historical phenomenon, a fossil. There will be mystics, but the old beliefs will already be fossils. When I see movies with priests, I laugh a lot: priests are like a real carnival, rabbis are like a parade of madmen, the Tibetan lamas, the Hare Krishnas, all of them are dressed up like transvestites. A religion does not need a uniform.

***Will there be new churches?***

Churches I don't know, but there will be great dance halls. All of these places will be converted into places for parties.

***How do you think art will evolve?***

We are seeing it now. With new means all-purpose art is born. That is to say, right now we are used to reading a poem, to admiring a sculpture or painting, to attending the theater . . . In a little machine you will have it all: literature, music, voice, images . . . you will have a third dimension—total art.

***How will our sense of time evolve?***

As we will live much longer, when we have three thousand years of life, it will be a pleasure to be old, because to be old is to be in the midst of the cosmos and the universe. We are going to feel the universe. It is a divine gift that life gives us. To be alive is an unimaginable gift. We have to get to work making this miracle better.

***In the universe of your comics, extraterrestrial life is very present. Why is that?***

It is present because it exists. For the same reason that there are metaphysical problems, politics, and everything. Why would someone not put all that in a comic? Genres are the worst! Comic theater, dramatic theater, the melodrama . . . I do not believe in this.

There is not a planet or a planetary system: there is a cosmos, a universe that is present in each second.

***Do you think there can be a more advanced civilization somewhere in the universe?***

Of course, it is completely believable. Why should we think we are the only beings that exist? We have to look for the solution to the phenomenon of the consciousness in all of the universe conceived as a unit. Just as there is knowledge and life in one place, it could be in another. It could be a different form of life from ours, even one incomprehensible to us.

# THIRTEEN



## THE ART OF HEALING

***According to you, the organism is a quagmire of unresolved problems.***

Of course, because if you do not want to make yourself conscious of what you have, the body transforms it into an illness. All secrets tend to appear in the same way that all mysteries tend to manifest themselves. Nature wants you to be healthy. Nature wants you to become fulfilled, and when you repress yourself, you repress a part of yourself that ends up leaving somehow.

***Where do addictions, that flagellate our societies, come from?***

From shortages in infancy. People try to compensate this way. Alcoholism is generally produced from a shortage in mother's milk. And heroin addiction is usually due to a lack of being, the absence of recognition; the drug fills the emptiness of not being loved.

***Does madness exist or is it an invention of the police as Topor would say?***

Yes, it exists. We need dream and reality. There is a moment in which individuality is erased; then the brain functions without control, and we go crazy. The brain is a universe in constant expansion and movement. We go along in a rational prison that sails within a crazy person.

***What do you believe is the most widespread illness?***

Emotional suffering. Civilization predisposes us to that.

***You have attended many operations in which shamans cured people. What is real and what is exaggeration in these primitive treatments?***

It is what I call the "sacred trap." The shaman carries out theatrical acts and imitates powers; by imitating powers, he produces the effect because it opens the doors of this mysterious thing that we are.

***You always doubted what you saw in these kinds of rituals, but then they took on another sense, more metaphorical, that could be integrated into your own therapies.***

I quit not believing in anything. It is not that I doubted; it is that I did not want to believe in it. The positive step I took toward these practices was to eliminate belief or nonbelief; I took these two attitudes off the top. Scientists do not believe, but they believe in not believing. It is a mistake. It is

necessary to not have prejudices about these acts, to experiment calmly and see the results.

***The way of acting as a shaman is, in whatever case, metaphoric.***

Of course, because the unconscious uses metaphors. If, for example, you give someone who has caused you a lot of pain a ball painted black, and you tell him, "Take this. It is your cancer, not mine. Keep it." This is a metaphor.

***But the sick, more or less, usually resist being healed.***

It is not that he resists more or less, it is that he resists always, for one simple reason: the illness, in itself, is already a symbol of resistance. A resistance to the message of the unconscious. It is producing a prohibition and, when you resist it, you create an illness.

When I read the tarot, I fight as if I were in martial arts combat: a karate fight with the client, who resists being helped. The tarot is a martial art, which tries to give you life, but the client fights and resists.

You fight with the defenses available to your level of consciousness. To pass from one level of consciousness to another is a battle. People resist being cured because they have been marked by a genetic, sociocultural, familial training, which grants an identity. Sick people are asking for something; they want to be loved. To be able to help them, you have to fight to get them to accept that they are never going to obtain what was not given to them in childhood.

***Paradoxically, and at the same time, the sick ask to be healed.***

What the sick are really asking for is to be relieved of the pain not of the sickness. They ask for metaphysical aspirin. They want their symptoms to disappear but resist seeing the essence that produced the illness. They do not want to see because losing our identity is what we fear most.

***It is like fear of death?***

No. It is much more than the fear of death. The brain does not conceive of the fear of death, but it does conceive of the fear of losing identity, which is its equivalent. The person who loses his memory can say that he is a living dead man, that he has to begin a new life.

***Without the underlying primitive milieu or superstition, what remains of the healing ceremonies carried out by the shamans?***

It is not only a question of a primitive milieu. We are not primitives. When I was in India planning to shoot my film *Tusk* (1978), I looked for a teacher. I met with one who came out of the hotel and was really fat; he had been enriched and had become fat; he had been Westernized in a grotesque way. Another day I saw a parade of sadhus, holy men of India, protesting because the price of marijuana had risen: they were all drugged. The women sold their saris of silk and bought ones made of nylon. These primitive villages want to come here; this explains the invasion of shamans of all kinds who arrive in our cities. All who come to save the world want to enter our civilization. And what attracts

them most is money. This is what attracts attention in the West. It is ridiculous that we, who have come out of the primitive mentality, have arrived at a rational mentality and return seeking the secrets in the primitive. We cannot go back. We must take this knowledge, apply it to our rational minds, and go even further still.

***But there are those who go to the jungle in search of rituals, shamans, and references, which we here have forgotten.***

The trendy neoshamanism is ridiculous. It is good to visit other villages to learn techniques that we have forgotten, but not to imitate them or to reproduce their superstitions and gods. That does not benefit us. It is absurd. We will never be Native Americans or Amazon Indians, although we propose this. The book by Antonin Artaud, *The Tarahumaras*, is pitiful in that it talks about this village with a tourist's eye. It tends to idealize the ancients. They were not better than we are, although the village and the folklore have always preserved the remains of a deceased knowledge that, in any case, we cannot use. The traditionalist attitude is not useful to us.

***Psychomagic consists of what?***

Psychomagic consists in giving advice to solve problems by applying, in a nonsuperstitious way, the techniques of magic. The elements on which it relies are all classes of symbolic acts that can be proposed to a person.

The first thing we have to realize is that when a person has a problem it is necessary to introduce him to his problem, so that he is conscious of it. It is necessary to bring him to the border of his problem, not to immediately separate him from it but to get him to face his fears. Once these are overcome, the anxiety disappears and the person can rise. If someone is afraid of something, it is necessary to face this fear. This is not something new: it is necessary to make the person face his anxiety. From there, there are concrete methods to help. When a person has suffered all of his life, the only thing he can do is let himself die and be reborn. This one does metaphorically, for example, by changing a name and creating a new calling card.

Psychomagic depends on very simple, creative solutions that have no limits. The solutions are not aggressive things; they are benign things, never destructive. For example, if we bury something, we have to plant something. Creativity should not be viewed from a harmful side or as a possibility to do harm, you understand? Because creativity from the harmful side converts into destructibility. And destructibility doesn't interest us.

***Can someone apply Psychomagic herself or is a teacher needed?***

Of course one can apply it herself. I do it continuously. I have appropriate and sacred fetishes and comical ones also. I have created a little altar, conditional reflections.

***What characteristics does a person have to have in order to cure another?***

It is not to cure another, it is to help another cure himself. He who wants to cure another is conceited. Not even the other cures. God cures. I believe that the motive power of all of this is goodwill. When

a person develops in himself a feeling of goodwill, it informs the feelings of others and does what it can to take away the bad. One has to put himself in the other's place to make it possible for the other to discover how to cure himself. To do this, the other must raise his level of consciousness and rearrange his vision of things. We all perceive life from a particular point of view, more or less variable and at a certain height. When we change this point of view, our lives change.

***The therapist should put aside morality in order to cure?***

She should be amoral, but not immoral. Immorality reveals an illness. For the therapist to be amoral means she does not judge. Like a doctor: if an assassin has a wound, the surgeon helps him and stitches the wound. The therapist should act in the same way. She has to put aside her prejudices and, even more, still act as a psychological therapist.

***To cure, is a certain personal disinterest and distance essential?***

We should specify what is understood by "disinterest." It is good to not want anything from the person, but this also requires a certain cynicism and indifference. The therapist has an interest in curing the person, and it is precisely this interest that creates the disinterest. I speak only of those therapists who do not seek to gain money or swindle people, as some fortune-tellers do. There is another kind of interest, which manifests when the psychotherapist has a complex against the client and wants to convert himself into a support for the sick, to reinforce his own ego, or to exploit his narcissistic interest. Other times they give in to political or social interests. I knew a psychoanalyst who systematically destroyed couples because she hated men. There is also the desire to be loved. Or the simplest: to try to be a patient's friend, but this one must also be put aside to be able to cure.

***You usually say healing is everything but a surrealist game, but your psychomagic prescriptions include a lot of games and even humor.***

There is some humor, but what happens is that when we do something we have never done, we are already on the road to healing. We must break the routines. As we speak of the unconscious language or of dreams, these acts can appear strange. This path is contrary to that taken by Freud with psychoanalysis and dream interpretation. Psychoanalysis notes the dreams and interprets them in light of reason; it goes from the unconscious to the rational. I go in reverse. I take the rational and capsize it in the language of dreams, introducing dreams into the language of reality. Psychomagic acts build dreams into reality. If these things do not happen, it is necessary to make them happen. Reality seeks oneiric liberation, and we need to make something happen so that someone heals. Everything that is irrational either makes you laugh or frightens you. Laughter or fear: they are only reactions to get out of the ordinary.

***The truth is that Psychomagic has become popular. How do you take that?***

I find many psychomagic acts being carried out on the street that I have not prescribed. (*Laughter.*) It is true that people are using it a lot. At first I was very discreet. For years, I gave advice and wrote it down. Then Gilles Farcet came along, and we wrote a book about Psychomagic, which took him four years to finish while I continued working. When the book came out in France, it was a big success,

and they translated it into Castilian and Italian. People began to seek me out, and then I could experiment. For one year, I received, each day, two people in my home in order to try to develop the rules of Psychomagic. I thought it was part of my creativity and that, before I died, I had to be able to teach the rules to my son Cristóbal, my wife Marianne, and then to a few therapists. I continued training people, but the process is very slow. It takes at least four or five years of experience and a lot of artistic activity.

The fundamental difference between this therapy and psychoanalysis is that psychoanalysis was created by people who came from the university and science, while I have created a technique that comes from art and theater. I say a scientist cannot be a therapist. Treatment is the work of artists and poets. If you are not that, you cannot cure.

***It works completely with the body but keeping in mind the existence of the ghost body, on which you have done much investigation.***

I began to study religions: Tantra, yoga, alchemy, Zen, Chinese medicine, the Kabbalah. I realized that each culture creates an imaginary biology that actually works. For example, I studied the Muladhara chakra, which is between the sex and the anus. It is like a four-petaled flower that has in its center an elephant with the trunk raised. At first, I thought, “I truly do not feel I have any flower between the penis and the anus.” But when I went to India, I decided to ride an elephant, to see what it was like. And so I knew why they said this about that chakra: when you ride an elephant, you feel the strength of nature. The elephant moves like a gyroscope, it does not lean to the right or to the left, it moves like a ship on a calm sea. It is as if you have the monumental strength of the earth between your legs. So, I realized, that these flowers and this elephant are metaphors that must be understood in their cultural sense; they are locations in the body, but they are imaginary.

I tell many people who want to learn do-in massage<sup>\*4</sup> to not press the body with the thumb looking for mythical meridians. I teach them in an hour to push with the thumb on the person’s whole body, and the patient heals. Chakras and meridians are imaginary biology. The body is a whole. I was interested in imaginary biology because I realized that when you imagine your body, you are creating it. Castaneda has a strong imaginary biology, with the assembly point and all that, which comes from European esotericism, the aura and such. I also studied mutilated bodies, those with what’s called “ghost members.”

***What advice would you give for losing the fears we suffer?***

Each one is distinct, but I have always said it is necessary to manifest them in a psychomagic shape. You must first discover what you are afraid of; then you can overcome it. If a person is afraid of dying, I make her go to a funeral or I bury her symbolically. Whoever fears poverty, I send him to another city to beg for a day. I make the client live on the edge of what she fears, to face it.

Georg Groddeck said something I like a lot: “You are afraid of what you desire.” If a person is very afraid of being homosexual, I send him dressed as a transvestite to a gay bar. To defeat a fear, you must let it enter into your life as a concrete shape.

***Will medicine in the future contemplate subjects like Psychomagic, theater, or psycho-***

## ***shamanism?***

Medicine in the future will have to integrate all of this, although it already is doing it. I have many students of Dr. Ryke Geerd Hamer who have created bio-psycho-genealogy, which is a delirium to me but, little by little, it becomes evident.

For two years, my friend Jean-Claude Lapraz, a doctor in phytotherapy, sent his patients for me to see if psychological problems existed. Between us, we came to an agreement in principle that said: "We do not assume that all illnesses are psychological, but we are going to observe what there is of psychology in the illnesses." We studied psychic events in relation to the physical, and at the same time, we both did our work.

## ***Do doctors today practice a little psycho-shamanism?***

For the big majority of them, you are only a number and you have nothing to say! We must radically reform the state of medicine: from the hospitals to the habits. Nurses, doctors, they do not know how to treat patients; they think they have to treat the patient cruelly and impersonally, and this does not work. They treat machines.

What is fundamental to healing is that the person express herself and speak. You notice, when you heal someone, that it produces a change in a person who has been listened to. To heal, you have to know who the patient is and where the illness and character have developed. To know the patient, it is essential to develop a genealogy tree at least to the great-grandparents. But none of this is applied today in conventional medicine.

## ***What is your opinion about suicide?***

If you have a grave illness, incurable, suicide is a possible option. People have the right to end their lives. Life should not be prolonged agony. Current medicine prolongs pain, and this is awful.

## ***How do you see the way our society looks at death?***

It is an atrocity, how one is born and how one dies. It's not a way to come into the world. We must bring birth and death back into the home.

# FOURTEEN



## UNDERSTANDING LIFE

### *Is all of life, perhaps, a miracle?*

Life is rich. If you carefully observe a meadow, you realize that each plant is a different color of green, each ladybug is different from the other. Many of us know the anecdote of the man who photographed snowflakes and discovered that each one was different: thousands of millions of snowflakes, each one with its own shape. That is to say, everything is variety, difference. But, at the same time, everything communicates; we are united by secret threads. Life is a miraculous creation. All of reality is a pure union of mental and emotional threads.

### *We must tiptoe lightly upon the world without becoming victims of reality.*

Our footfalls are important. The whole being reflects in the bottoms of the feet, where all the endings reach. Our step defines us. Loved ones, dogs and cats, for example, know our steps. But there are people who live very enclosed in the mind and are unconcerned with their steps, as if the earth were really dirty and one could stain his feet.

When I left Chile, I was twenty-three years old; when I went back, I was sixty-three. The streets were full of memories, of emotionalism; there was all of my adolescence, full of poetry. I walked on the sidewalks, caressing them with the soles of my shoes. Acts toward others should be as delicate as the steps we take on a land that is part of ourselves.

### *What does “do not become a victim” of reality mean?*

The person who does not control her territory does not control her existence. If someone is not conscious, she is taken over, not only outwardly but also with the thoughts that assault her. She is very vulnerable to desires and feelings. For example, you live calmly with your wife, then—catastrophe! Suddenly you lose control because you have fallen in love with another. You don't have to fall victim to that reality; what you have to do is navigate in it, overcome the winds and sandstorms. Amid the storms at sea and the signs, you must move forward calmly and look toward the port you're heading for.

In New York, when I was filming *The Holy Mountain*, I had problems of all sorts. I soaked six or seven T-shirts a night with my sweat. I went to see a Chinese sage that someone had recommended. He was a poet, a great master of tai chi, and a doctor. When he first saw me, he said, “What is your purpose in life?” I was disconcerted and did not answer. He continued, “If you do not tell me what is your purpose in life, I cannot heal you.” So I understood that if a ship crosses the sea without a purpose, it will arrive at no port. What prevents life from devouring us is having a purpose. The

higher it is, the further it will carry us.

As a mystic, I have but one aim: to know God. Not the God talked about everywhere, but this incredible thing that moves the universe. Further still: to dissolve myself calmly into that. This is my purpose, and for that, I do not need to be a guru, or a visionary, or any sort of paper doll.

### ***Should we act in life as if it were a big dream?***

As if in a lucid dream, not like in a nightmare. And the more lucid a dream is, the less of a dream it is. To cross a river is to cross life: complete happiness in spite of complete suffering. I do not like wars at all. I have lived through many, beginning with the world war. I am not one who believes that the human being should be distressed.

### ***But the fact is we live filled with anxiety.***

Remember that Mary and Zacharias see an angel, and that, twice, the angel tells them to have no fear. When I was writing *Gospels for Healing*, this scene came into my head. I believe the angel took away their fear. The first step to entering into divine and cosmic consciousness is to lose the fear. Why? Because the essence of animals is to fear, and that limits us. Our body is afraid of becoming food. That is the first and the most basic. Movies like *Alien* and *Jaws* drive at this primitive depth: to be devoured or to not have anything to eat.

Fear, on the other hand, is useful. If children do not learn that fire burns, they will all die. Fear preserves life; without fear we may not live. Panic, however, is another thing. Anxiety is fear of the unknown. When you do not know that you are afraid, then you feel anguish. What is essential is not so much freeing yourself from fear as not letting yourself be dominated by panic.

### ***It is said that love grows insofar as criticism decreases. How should we act toward the defects of others?***

The enemy of love is to criticize another. If someone criticizes you, it is because they do not love you. It is necessary to accept people as they are. However, to criticize is one thing and objective judgment is another. To judge is bad, but to know what is happening with others is good. One must say to the other, "I am not criticizing you, because I love you. But I see your limits, and I would like to make you conscious of them. Then you can do what you want." This is not criticism.

### ***You usually say, "What you give, you give to yourself; what you do not give, you give up."***

And this is to say that whatever you do in the world, you do to yourself; and whatever you do not give to the world, you lose. If I keep my knowledge, I lose it. I had a teacher, an alchemist, who was one hundred and ten years old, and he hung himself with a wire in his room. He had encyclopedic and monumental knowledge, but he doled it out in small phrases . . . How did accumulating such knowledge serve him? He committed suicide!

One receives knowledge and gives it. When you give knowledge, you enrich yourself. If you do not give love, you are detracting from yourself. If I begin to help people, if I begin to heal people, I begin to heal. Do you understand? To be a therapist, you have to be a patient. The first thing to do to heal

yourself is to heal others. The world is you and me. The world is not ours, it is what we are. I do not want to go about with dirty feet. Why do I have to walk on contaminated land or between trees that are dying? What we suffer, we are doing to ourselves: if we poison the atmosphere, we attack our lungs. If I ingest toxins like nicotine or alcohol, I am contaminating my blood; but since blood is part of everything—my blood is not my own—I am poisoning humanity.

I have one more saying: “I do not want anything for myself that I do not want for others.”

***You have written that to transform oneself one must give and not ask, which is very different.***

To transform oneself one must give, but to transform oneself one must also learn. One closes oneself off and does not admit love from another, the tenderness or the help of another. The real leap is learning to receive, which is as difficult as learning to give. And it is necessary to learn to ask for what one needs: justice is to give to oneself what one deserves. This is why the gospels say, “Knock and the door will be opened.” If I ask for a long life, it is because I have the right to ask for it. If I ask that we will use an energy other than oil, it is because I have the right to ask for it, just as I have the right to ask that the rivers be clean or that wars stop or that wealth does not accumulate only in some countries while misery exists in others! I have the right to ask for wealth to circulate all around the planet. We have to learn to ask for what is just and to not ask for what it is not necessary to ask.

***And the people who do not ask . . . ?***

A saint who asks for nothing is a saint who lives imprisoned in himself and who lets the world go by. It is an individual decision, but it is necessary to have someone to whom you transmit your wisdom. A moment ago, I mentioned my alchemist teacher, who possessed incredible wisdom and who revealed secrets to me in droplets. He had been a magician, a famous man. He had put all of his money in the bank and, by an economic error of inflation, he lost it, and he did not know how to live. And so he hung himself with a wire. He hung himself for not having shared with others. I had a deep crisis when I learned of this, and I interrogated myself as to this man’s end. I learned something: the wisdom that you do not give, you lose. At this man’s death, with the reaction it produced, I started my Mystical Cabaret, a place where, once a week, I could teach others everything I had learned during that week. At times, they were stealing ideas from me, but this does not matter. There are people who say they invented something that I invented. It doesn’t matter.

Once, this same centenarian teacher, who had the body of an adolescent, told me he had studied martial arts. “Me, too,” I answered. We were in Notre Dame, and he said, “Attack me.” I put myself in a combat position, and he moved his left hand in such an incredibly beautiful way that while I looked at it, fascinated, he gave me a big slap. “Beauty is the most dangerous weapon,” he warned. It took me a long time to understand. He used a secret Chinese practice, which consists of drawing a snake in the air with your hand to distract the enemy. And that is how beauty is: the most awful weapon.

***The human being’s most dangerous weapon is the imagination. Where does imagination come from?***

Imagination is a game of constructing what we have. By diverse channels, we acquire things: words, emotions, desires, needs, feelings, perceptions. We organize all these things with our rational

consciousness, the way we have learned to do. Although we may be primitives in the process of identifying and knowing our own possibilities, we organize them. In the brain, all of these parts accumulate and can mix and organize with different shapes, as in a game of Legos. In this process, we not only rely on what is given to us from the outside, acquired, but also on what we find, mysteriously, in our brains: that which we call unconscious. Using imagination is creating with these materials. When you read, you are imagining much more than you are reading. The imagination is a language richer than limited oral language. The imagination exceeds rational limits. Visual, tactile, olfactory, oral, auditory, emotional, sexual, and intellectual imaginations exist. An emotional imagination carries your feelings to the sublime or the criminal. A sexual imagination is like that of the Marquis de Sade; a material imagination is like that of Karl Marx, who saw the world through the economy. I call the imagination creativity—the foundation of life. If we suffer, it is because of a shortage of imagination, for lack of creativity.

***After all, do we have to forgive life of something?***

*(Smiling.)* Your question is sweet, because it makes life an object and you a subject outside of life, and more than that, a judge of life. We are not paper dolls outside of life! To forgive life, we would have to first forgive ourselves. And we would have to be guilty of something, and we are not. There is no fault. Nor does a criminal exist who bears all the guilt: all individual crime is a product of the family, the society, and history.

***I was speaking in terms of resentment toward life.***

One must lose resentment; it is big work to resolve fury and grudges. We are full of grudges. We are full of grudges and frustrations for love not obtained. Illness is a lack of love.

***And against the lack of love?***

Creativity.

***We can learn to be creative?***

Of course, and I will give you a course immediately.

# PART THREE



## *An Accelerated Course in Creativity*

## INTRODUCTION

When I speak of creativity, I am referring to a complete change in ourselves. If I never wanted to reflect aloud about this subject, it is because what you are going to hear is very strange. Without creativity, the world goes all wrong. I am sure that the majority of illnesses come from a lack of creativity, and the social problems we have in the world are due to this shortage. Misunderstood creativity provokes war and crimes.

To work with creativity, you must be a critic of yourself and all that you represent. When I look at a person, I can see the state of his body. I can also see his mental pressures, as if his spirit is withdrawn into himself. In others, I perceive the doubts they have about themselves, or rather I observe their upbringing like a heavy scab, that they were raised in rationality. Others dance all the time with the things of the past. When I look, I don't do it with a critical eye but with a creative one. If I read the tarot to someone, I see the person completely, because I release any restrictions. This is only an example of creativity.

I want to explain what creativity is as a whole and why creativity is so rare. Creativity is so strange that with it one can become Christ, Buddha, the Virgin, or Athena. Creativity is related to religion and also to mythology. It has saved my life. For this reason, I am going to begin this course by recounting things of my past.

I will tell you that I was born in a working-class neighborhood, that my father had a store, and he was a shopkeeper. I talk about this in a book called *La Danza de la Realidad* [Reality Dance]. My world was very limited, and I thought that creativity was the only key I had. The truth is that I liked to study. I was a good student, but school bored me a little. Since my uncles, whom I hated, were graduates, I abandoned the university. So I said to myself: "The only key that can save my life is imagination."

But how does one develop the imagination? In my case, it was not difficult. I had learned to read at five years old, and I spent a large part of my time between the covers of books: fairy tales, stories of all kinds . . . I developed my imagination through reading. Visions formed through books are always intellectual visions, because they arise from words. But the imagination is much more than that. Creativity pushes words out.

One of the biggest enemies of creativity is morality. One must be amoral to develop the imagination. Morality imprisons the imaginary in us. One must be courageous and throw away this crutch.

## HISTORY OF THE IMAGINARY

The human being, historically, began to live enclosed within himself. Later, he realized that he could stop allowing himself to be influenced by elements that were not part of himself, that were outside of his body. We put ourselves in nature, and it turns out that we are nature! In the beginning, however, the world proved foreign to us.

For example, let's suppose I am a savage: I know that the world is not me, but I realize that there

are trees, vegetation, flowers, moss . . . By means of witchcraft, one day I incorporate a tree into my persona. I create a vegetable totem. I am united with the tree, with the totem. When one plants a tree, this tree is I; when the trunk is cut, I die. When I die, they deposit seeds in my mouth, and another marvelous tree grows. From my corpse, a tree emerges. Later I am a seed. Incorporating the trees, I begin to work the earth, because I identify with the plants. What is at the foundation of my imagination is the vegetable world, and this has been passed on to today in the use by phytotherapists of healing plants. To cure, it's necessary to enter into the spirit of the plants, but the inverse is also true: it's necessary to open a door so that the spirit of the plants can enter me. Until the spirit of the plants has permeated me, I will not be creative.

Where the spirit of the plants ends is the *Om Mani Padme Hum*, or the diamond in the lotus. Here, all of the Tibetan religion is concentrated. From the swamp comes the lotus in which the Buddha rises. All Egyptian or Buddhist religion settles on the incorporation of a plant. Because this opens to the sun and extends her perfume, God emerges. I am a plant that grows from the mud that grows from the unconscious; I grow from the conscious, from knowledge, and the Being of Light springs from me. All this has a remote origin. The plant that I incorporated into me has opened my doors. There is a Zen koan that says: "Opened door to the north, opened door to the south, opened door to the east, opened door to the west." It is the reply to what is Buddha. You may not understand what this means, but at least you understand that something is opened. The person who is not an initiate in creativity devotes himself to the search, but it's going to take a lot to open himself. To be creative, you must let loose of yourself. And, in this way, you enter Zen, because the essential currency of Zen is to let loose of what is tied up, to liberate yourself.

As humankind continued its advance, he began to incorporate the animal. Man absorbs animals: insects, frogs, tigers, lions, leopards, spiders . . . in other words, the animal totem. From the animal totem, all the gods will be born: Apollo is a frog, for example. In many cultures they wear animal masks: leopards in Mexico, crocodiles in Africa. The zodiac is symbolized by animal figures, and even today the incorporation of the animal totem persists in our daily life: we use expressions like "to be predatory" or "make war like predators." We have incorporated the animal in us.

This is how, from the beginning, human beings produced creativity. From each thing man incorporates, God emerges. With each incorporated dimension, our being grows. After incorporating the animal, man becomes a hunter; he can raise cows, sheep . . . If he incorporates a tiger, he can hunt a tiger; if he introduces an elephant, he can dominate an elephant. That's where the god Ganesh of India came from, the head of an elephant. To the Indian culture, the spider is Maya, the one that weaves the universe; and this universe is a dream, a dream woven in the form of a spider web. In the tarot, we see that the Arcana VIII is Justice, and Justice is a descendant of the spider. The number eight descends from the spider: eight legs, the symbol of the infinite and other references.

But we must go further. Human beings contemplate the movements of the moon, the movements of the sun; looking at the stars, man incorporates the rhythms of the cosmos. From there law is born, and royalty; all of the organization of society is born of the incorporation of the cosmic rhythms. For example, there was a king who on full moon nights made gifts to his village; when the moon disappeared, he was demoted, following the moon's conduct. Man thinks in cycles. The inclusion of the heavenly body in social organization still persists. We are governed by a president who symbolizes the sun, and by the wife of the president who symbolizes the moon. The emperor is the solar symbol; the high priestess is the lunar symbol. The assimilation of cosmic rhythms is important for us. Illumination is attained with reference to these cycles. We say: "I am going to illuminate

myself. I am going to become the sun.” And we shine like the sun. That is to say, that our supreme end is to convert ourselves into the sun (Amon-Ra), because the moon reflects the light of the sun. That means the *I* has to be like the moon, that humble, to reflect in its totality the light of the sun. When we gave the sun a masculine signification, our society began to degenerate. In Germany there are traces of an ancient civilization in which the moon was masculine and the sun feminine, the remnants of a matriarchal society in which converting oneself into the sun meant converting oneself into a woman. Today it would mean converting oneself into a man, unconsciously speaking. All of this is not to say that we should understand the sun as a paternal representation or anything like that. Deep down the sun is essentially androgynous.

So in the Enlightenment, man decides to be intellectual, purely intellectual. And the mechanic begins to produce machines: gas motors and tools that operate with manual energy, like watches. And man incorporates these machines. He imitates the conduct of these machines! He arrives at rational thought. Even today there are traces of this rationalism of the Enlightenment. When I go with a Frenchman to the cinema, he says: “But it is not logical. It is not possible.” If we are going to see Kubrick’s *The Shining*, when the protagonist is locked up then suddenly bursts out with an ax, we say: “That is not possible. It is not logical. Who opened the door for him?” Because it does not appear possible to us, it does not appear acceptable. Everything that is not logical is worthless to us! This example reveals the introduction of the machine into the imaginary world, because machines are absolutely and totally logical. They have a very clear purpose, therefore; man has to have a clear focus. Buddhism, by contrast, seeks illumination without purpose. We are marred by rationalism. To be rational is good, but to be only rational is a leprosy, an epidemic, a sickness. When sexuality took a rational turn by way of religion, for example, it produced a catastrophe. It created a rational morality, which has spread out into all of society and which is profoundly destructive. Incorporating the rational into sex creates a problem, which is precisely what has driven us to smashing rationality.

In reaction to this illness, Freud and the surrealists appeared. Surrealism was very important, because we began to identify ourselves with dreams; we revived the reign of the dream as a part of ourselves. The Greeks believed that dreams were of the gods, not of human creation. But to incorporate the dream, I am the dream creator.

One more example: Now, in the twenty-first century, we have computers. This supposes a complete change in our mentality, because in ten years we have taken on all the information systems. Now we can look at a house from all sides. You know, with this imagery, you can enter through the window, visit an apartment, and leave. We can look at a person’s brain; go through all of her veins and all of her body to get to what we want to look at. We are beginning to have a computer attitude. This is the mutation that we are suffering at the moment. We process data differently. What will come next? So I have given a brief history of the development of the imaginary.

What I want to explain is that, if I look at my shoes, which were made in the rational era, I see the vegetable, shoes as roots. I see the animal, shoes as leather, the material used to make them. And also I can glimpse where they take me, shoes as objects, and this is rational. Surrealist: I see that all of my childhood is there inside! And in the actual time period, shoes can be red, can be green, yellow; I can change their color, I can change their form; there are ten million shoes that I can have on my feet at the same time. I am free to leave my mental prison.

## LEAVING OUR PRISONS

I begin this part of the course with the word “prison.” I hope this is a clue for you all. For me, this reflection has been very important. I live in reality. Here’s the story: I have been born in a limited body; I feel impotent. All of us have four elements: the intellect, the emotional, the sexual, and the physical body. We live in ideas, emotions, desires, and needs. These four elements are represented in Tibetan, Indian, and Hindu mandalas, in the World tarot card, and so forth. It is a division into four parts, with a fifth element in the center. This is the true path through all of the history of the art of humanity. In each of the four parts, we have dragons as guardians. Each tower is firmly protected. We recall the image of the lions that guard the door of the temple, or the gargoyles of Notre Dame. We have within ourselves some excellent guardians, which keep us restricted and well shielded. My intellect is locked, guarded; my emotions, shuttered; my sexuality and my needs, watched over. Everything is protected, and these very jailers that we have created are precisely what prevent us from being creative. For this reason, what I am saying is a little revolutionary, because to be creative one must defeat the guards and throw open the doors, even though one neither sees them nor identifies them. They are like the bad witch who had to be defeated in the stories of Hades; they are the ogres, the fear . . . They are our babysitters. We have been shaped by the history of humanity, by the development of the planet, by society, by government, by the family. All of this lives inside us. Our guards are prehistoric. Little by little, they have become strong; they have been pigeonholed. We need to attack these guards in order to liberate ourselves. The problem is that attacking them makes us feel threatened, unprotected—it’s scary.

The final limitation to vanquish in order to be creative is our human waste. We are a body that expels decomposing matter. Urine, saliva, sperm, menses . . . We are talking only about the body. A person who deeply guards his excretions cannot be creative. In Ayurvedic medicine there is a school that uses urine for medicinal purposes. In Mexico, I found a healer who treats with all types of animal excrement, and according to him each animal’s excrement has its own different medicinal capacity.

When creative people sometimes get blocked, I use Psychomagic and have them paint a square with their excrement. This block usually has its origin in infancy, in families that were very demanding about cleanliness and who prohibit their children from getting dirty or eating with their fingers. They’ve been prohibited from being free.

## BE CREATIVE

If you want to be creative, you must practice the following exercise: stand over an absorbent surface, drink a liter or two of water, and then urinate making designs with the traces the water leaves. It is very important to remember that in order to be creative, we must allow the dirty child to exist within ourselves. In excretion, there cannot be limits. I became very good friends with the surrealist painter Leonora Carrington, who had been Max Ernst’s partner. I met her in Mexico. She told me that she had also been Buñuel’s lover but that he had suddenly abandoned her. So one day when she had her period, she used the blood to make handprints all over his apartment. It was her creative reaction, a psychomagic act in which she used the menstrual blood as an element of transformation. I have prescribed a lot of psychomagic acts like this one. In the magic of love, menstrual blood is very useful. Excretions, in general, are used in all kinds of spells. Magic functions, a lot of times, with excretions: the dribbles of toads, snakes, spiders . . . All that we consider personal, like excretion, is used creatively.

If you want to be prolific, you cannot have any sexual limits, like what happened with the first great pioneer in this, the Marquis de Sade. This is why surrealism adopted him: because he could imagine all sorts of sexual relations. In his *120 Days of Sodom*, Sade proves to be like a scientist investigating all the possibilities of sex without limits. You can go from cannibalism to sadistic crime, to incest—try anything. To be able to wake up the creativity, you must have a sexual imagination free of all morality, free of all religious imagery. You must free yourself. An artist needs to be able to imagine the greatest aberrations. We need to develop all the possibilities in our minds.

When someone has an imagination that is out of balance, he can assassinate a million Jewish people, like what happened with Hitler, or make an atomic bomb explode. In these cases, people are controlled by the dark side that lives inside us.

One of the most insurmountable guards that keeps watch over us is the superego. Having been molded by our parents, it permanently tells us: “This you do, this you do not do, this or that is prohibited.” You must incorporate the superego, dominate it, and destroy it.

A creative being cannot have any emotional limits. This means that we have to be conscious of the fact that we can kill or betray, be greedy, conceited, avaricious, or quick-tempered . . . Emotionally I can and should imagine everything in me. I can be a saint, or I can be perhaps the best benefactor of humanity, while at the same time I can be the kind of person who poisons the water supply to eliminate life. In my emotional imagery, I must break all the limitations, defeat them.

We have now seen aspects that refer to creativity and to the mind. The first thing I must defeat is the empire of words. If I am drowning in words, I cannot be creative. This is what I have done internally: I have visualized all of the degeneracy of the world. I am not a degenerate, but when I am creating something, I must have all the elements at my disposal. When I see a person, I eliminate any limitations. That way, the person can tell me what is wrong, and it is not going to surprise me. One of the biggest stumbling blocks in therapeutic creativity is surprise. A therapist cannot be surprised; she must be prepared to hear anything. Nothing will ever surprise her because she has imagined everything. Now, wonderment is something very distinct from surprise.

I have said that words are the first limiting factor—the most essential—in creating our prisons. It is generally true in our society that “I am what I say.” This idea still persists, in spite of the fact that Freud, Lacan, and others, following surrealism, smashed the idea that one is what one says. Yet we tell ourselves things all day long. “Dimwitted” friendships involve meeting up to tell things, not do things. We tell ourselves things clucking like chickens. We educate ourselves by talking, not by doing things. This is the reason for the saying, “There is a lot of distance between talking and doing.” We spend our lives saying, “But you told me” or “Take back what you said, immediately.” It is very childish; it is the childishness of verbal education, where only words mean anything. And attempting to be creative in this state is useless. A world where there are only words is one where there is no creativity. Words become hysterical when the objective is the words themselves. Creativity grows outside of words. When the poet works essentially with words, then they explode. They are scattered and broken.

# FIFTEEN



## EXERCISES FOR THE IMAGINATION

We've just completed a short, more or less theoretical, introduction to the imagination. But, what do we do with all this material? Are we able to disabuse ourselves of these old ideas? This is the basis of our work.

The first thing to do to be creative is the following: We live within spatial limitations. The intellect is compressed by the skull, and when your eyes are closed, it's dark. To close the eyes is to be in a prison. Each time I close my eyes, I enter into a dungeon. This impression of space comes from the concept of private property. Society has created private property, the right to a particular space that pertains to me and to no one else. We are accustomed to not occupying too much space, to being narrow-minded. In our families, we're each assigned a particular place at the table. In school, I have my own bench; I cannot leave my place. This is what they teach us.

“Who are you to tell me this?”: people who express themselves this way do it because they do not have their own space. They think that we are nothing. We must then, apparently, be in an absurd space. We are not big. Beginning this exercise, we are not yet big. What we have to do is tell ourselves: “This blackness that I see is the blackness of the universe, so that each time I close my eyes, I enter cosmic space.” We must give up this idea! We must create the space! I felt limited, mentally, and I said to myself, “How can I be more intelligent or more perceptive?” Then I closed my eyes, and I imagined myself as a light, and I put the light as far as possible into this infinite universe where I could not reach. I began with a rectangular universe. That is to say, I projected myself forward. I advanced and advanced. Each time further, lost in the space. Then I went to the right, each time further, reaching infinity. And to the left, each time further, to no one knows where. And then backwards, into remoteness. I put myself in a universe that had an in front of and a behind, a right and a left. And then I went up, each time higher, as high as possible, and then down, each time deeper down, into the deep abyss. This says that forward space is infinite, backward space is infinite, space to the right is infinite, space to the left is infinite, the space above is infinite, and the space below is infinite. I like the infinite a lot. I do not have mental fear. And now do this exercise: uncross your legs, sit straight up, and guide yourself with a light or simply think of yourself going forward. You have to do it. Even if you do not feel capable of doing it, you must try to get there. We are going to close our eyes and begin again.

## GROW

Another exercise: imagine that you are looking at me. Look at me. There is the rectangular look: to the right, to the left, up, down. But also there is another look. When I concentrate on the center of myself, little by little, I grow. My whole being grows like a sphere. To do this well, you have to be completely straight. You will see that this is the posture of meditation. I grow like a sphere. I cover the whole planet and then the whole universe. I grow; I fill the universe. I feel that I am a sphere that

occupies the entire universe. This describes a guru. I receive you into my sphere. Do you want me to hug you? When I hug you, it is the whole universe that hugs you. I have occupied all possible space to the infinite. I can tell you that if you do this, you will become a master. Still, to be a complete master is much more than this.

Now the far-off comes to me: the right comes to me, the left comes to me, that from below comes to me, that from above comes to me. The sphere comes to me. Doing this exercise, I am I and each is his own. This summarizes all the oriental disciplines. I occupy the entire universe, and then the universe comes to me. That is everything. One does not have to meditate for twenty years. Start doing this exercise, practice until you get good at it. You must sit upright and think with all your might about what you have imagined, in order to recognize all this power in yourself. When I am like that, I am invincible. Nothing can knock me down. I am a Buddha of stone. Nothing can knock me down, because I have recognized infinite space inside me. And I have the possibility to go to infinity. You are going to go as far as possible, and then you will reclaim everything. You are going to become completely creative.

The being that I perceive is not exactly the being that I am, because I have a sense of myself. My parents told me that I was ugly; so I saw myself as they saw me. And at times I saw myself according to the looks of others. But I really do have a sense of myself. And the sense of my own self changes! When I am depressed, all my physical senses are distorted by the depression I have. But I can see myself in different ways. I am not obligated to see myself the same way all the time. I can change my perception of myself. That is what shamanic magic is.

## EXPAND

Now let's consider shamanism. What we just talked about proceeded from Buddhism. I grow like the entire universe, and then I gather inside myself. I am a mountain, but which mountain? What am I?

Now we are going to work with the senses. Imagine that you look at me. Look at me a little. I am big, without limits. I am in the space. Then all of this space is completely inside me. Great comprehension, great compassion. I am reality. All of this strength—because to create space is to create strength—enters into you. Like they say in *Star Wars*: “May the force be with you.” I am going to create strength; the strength is in me. And when the strength is inside someone, it is like a sword. It is possible to draw it out through the ten fingers. I concentrate on myself; my fingers project out into infinity. My fingers have indeterminate power. And I strengthen my heart. In this concentrated body, I have a heart that grows to infinity. Now I do not need to grow like a sphere. A part of me can grow. I gather into myself, and my heart fills the world. And now that I have a solid base, my heart returns to me. That way, my sexuality can fill the world, my mind can fill the world, my strength can fill the world. This means I can do with the feeling of my body whatever I want to. Understood? You can do whatever you want to.

This I have applied, for example, to an initial massage. If one can open a heart, why not open it with the hand? Thus I make the body concentrate, and then it begins to open. And people begin to cry. Because they were living in a limited space.

## SHINE

As you see, feelings can change. The idea of living in a prison prevails. For exactly this reason, I can

remove what I want to from myself; I can release all that is heavy. Anything that is not clear, I do not allow. Now protect a part of yourself. You must protect only a bit of your body and move away any depressing nits. When we feel like we cannot do anymore, we act like boxers: “I am not defeated!” Like a dog, I expel the fleas, I expel everything that slows me down; and I will do what I have to do, simply that. Because the guards bother us, we must expel them. And we continue. You must grow like a sphere, return to your state, and then, when you feel solid—because this state gives a feeling of great solidity—let it out through whatever part of your body. Without limits! Your torso, your heart, your intestines, whatever you want. Fortify what you want.

Now you are going to illuminate yourselves right away, you are going to feel yourself a Buddha; you are going to know what it is. This will serve you. You must not get depressed thinking that you are doing it wrong. You begin by doing it, and you do what you can. I take in one hand the strength, the energy, and I begin to accumulate all the energy of the universe. It is the complete universe coming to me . . . The energy is going to arrive, and my energy is going to arrive . . . That’s it! This is strength. It is letting yourself go. Once you do this exercise, you can accumulate strength in your hands and communicate it to whatever or whomever you want: to your work, to yourself. Imagine that you have it; imagine it here, create it here. Masculine, feminine, right, left, all collaborate together. Father, mother, the two hands . . . Like a prayer! God help me! I am like this, praying, and when I am like this, the cosmic energy truly comes, it expands. I believe. I am the creator of my energy. Creativity exists in this.

At times there is a child inside us who has been punished. A child that is tormented because they have put him in a corner. They have annoyed him and put him on the defensive. This child rejects everything. And this child, who has been abused, abuses you, abuses the adult, abuses your strength, and does not let you be yourself. Enough already! We leave his whims aside. Right now we make him grow up. Let the young victim grow up, until it no longer bothers him. I leave myself, and I fill myself with strength. I am capable of filling myself with strength. All the energy we call space comes to me.

## BE WEIGHTLESS

Another exercise: the noncreative person obeys the force of seriousness. We feel the seriousness inside us. The earth tells us all the time: “You are earth. You are going to end in me.” Every moment we’re feeling that we must fall. Everything points to our vanishing, we become depressed, and little by little, we fall. We cannot imagine that there is another force that can defeat the sorrow. It’s true. If I have a feeling of sorrow, I will feel heavy. But if I begin to expel the sorrow from me, if I remove all the weight from me, I will feel light. I can dominate this feeling. I am creative when I do what I want with it. I can feel very heavy, or I can be weightless! In the same way that my body is dark on the interior but can be full of clarity. This is to be illuminated. An illuminated being will feel that her body is weightless. It has just as much weight as she wants, and it has the light she wants: it is all controlled. I am no longer prisoner of anything, of any feeling. I can weigh millions of kilos or none. I control this feeling of darkness and of light. I control the feeling of hot and cold. This brings us to the yoga of the Himalayas, and you don’t have to go there or to be a yogi. You just have to do it. Remember Chinese kung fu, where the battles take place in the air? You can do this, feel that light. This also has to do with illumination. When we are illuminated, it means the shadows are gone. And when we go toward the light, it’s possible to come into a shadow. We are not prisoners of the light. We may arrive at lightness and then return to being heavy; we do not have to be prisoners of lightness

either.

We work. Once this feeling is acquired, gather the force and fill the body with this force. You have power now. This is what the gurus do, with all kinds of conjuring tricks. Symbolically, it can be translated like this: “I can give energy incessantly.” Doing this gives infinite strength. The guru has worked with all of this and takes the imaginary side, which is unlimited. And people think he has produced a miracle, but each one of us can perform this miracle. It is simply working with the feeling we have of ourselves. Every minute I can change what I feel about myself. I can be big, I can be small. It is the feeling of myself that varies, that’s all. I can give and I can also take. Pick up the world’s energy and take it from yourself. All of this is the work of reaching infinity and returning.

## THE GAME OF TIME AND SPACE

We are not limited by time. The Sufis say: “Before God, we must live as if we had one minute, before men as if we had a thousand years.” That is to say, one second is eternity, and what is important is to expand it.

In India there lives a woman who hugs everyone who comes to her, and these people receive an incredible illumination. This same thing can be achieved if you feel and you concentrate in space. Create the force, an infinite force. Strengthen your heart. Then let the infinite and the eternal enter you. I am the one who does the hugging, but there are millions and millions of beings in my spirit, millions of worlds, millions of activities in my arms. And all future time comes: I stand beside infinity, and I stand beside eternity. Being in the moment explodes our prison.

When you go in search of a guru, you are searching for what you yourself cannot do: you want someone else to do for you what you should do yourself, because you think you cannot do it alone. But the guru has not received this gift from the sky, he has made it himself, he has created it. He has worked to achieve it. You too can achieve it!

We cannot remain the little capricious child who says: “You have hurt me, you have hit me, for this I do nothing. I have nothing inside me, I am not creative.” ENOUGH! We let the child we have inside us grow up. This being is a millionaire being; I am a millionaire. Before me there was all this, and after me there is much more. Here are all the separated human beings. But I am able to perform a union. When I move, all human beings move. It is like a yoke that represents the feeling of space and of time. And it all moves—this is important. Instead of asking others to move me, I have to move me myself. This is I, this is time, this is space. It is a sacred yoke. I am united. This is what I call a point of traction. From this point, everything moves. I can consider myself a point of strength. What I do, everyone does. That is to say, it is important that I do so everyone can do. When we do this exercise, we do it in the middle of eternity, in the middle of the infinite; we are the point of traction of humanity. Of humanity past and humanity future. All of the dead follow us; all of the unborn follow us. All of this will seem very strange, but in reality it is Buddhist thought! It is what Buddha has felt, simply. Our brains are made like this. When you open your brain, in a natural way, you arrive at this.

These are not just words, they are exercises in creativity. We cannot be cowards or be afraid to truly enter into what human beings are. We are beings with all these capacities, but we’ve allowed ourselves to be limited. We are in this moment, here and now. I. But it is not like this! It is the Everything that is here and now. All of humanity is within me. I am everyone who has been and everyone who will be. I live in the middle of all of space. This is when we can understand the

symbolic gesture where the palm of the hand faces forward: “I am here, and I stop the world.” An artist should think like this and consider these problems in making her work.

## BLESS THE WORLD

Another exercise: I am in eternity, feeling myself in the middle of the infinite future and the infinite past. I open my hands and close my hands. I make a benediction. That is to say, I am in eternity, and I bless the world. This is all. You have to do it like this, because a creator is absolutely paranoid. God is created. And we don't have to be afraid of taking ourselves for gods or goddesses. I bless you: I have a lot to give. I am strong. I possess everything that I need in order to bless the world. Enough with the inferiority complexes! With all of this you already have the means that the founders of sects usually deploy. They brainwash you so that you admire in them a superior power that you don't imagine you have in yourself, but you can have it also. Just clean out all the darkness, because we are full of spider webs. Push that child inside, get him good and clean, make him grow up. Because we have a guard, the mind, that makes us react the same way all the time. But by doing this exercise, you are converted into a creator. No one can do anything to you, except kill you, and not even that, because there is eternal life. That is to say, you are invincible. And everything that exists you can have. If talent exists, I can have talent. Look now how I lift my hands to the infinite; they are going to infinity: I take life. In the same way that I can give energy, I can take it. All of creativity, I can have. All the money in the world, I can have. Everything another has. Beauty? I can have beauty. Energy? I can have energy. All of this is for me. I can take and I can give. It is easy to imagine. It is like a game.

But to take is also difficult, because we have limits on receiving. When they ask us, “Who are you to have this?” “Why you?” This is what my parents said when I left Chile to study with the mime Marcel Marceau. In my case the answer was: “Why not?” And I did it. I knocked on his door, and I worked with him. I challenged the prohibition. And that's it. If you feel beautiful, you will be. You will be beautiful! You will be fascinating! You can fascinate people! But you don't conceive of yourself as a fascinating being. You come here to learn to be fascinating, because you can be. People simply see you as you see yourself. If I consider myself inferior, others will see me as inferior. But if I see myself as a god or goddess—that is the way others will see me! Not everyone, but a lot of people, the necessary ones. For example, we observe famous musicians. The whole world believes they are geniuses because they have previously felt they were geniuses. Then, with time, the myth stops because others start to realize it isn't so. It can work for a certain period of time, but then we must have the spirit to sustain this, “to feel beautiful.” If this interior feeling ceases and we haven't truly incorporated it, everything undoes itself. Therefore, we must continue with patience, constancy, and perseverance. If we do not persevere, we are not creators. Creation is, before everything else, voluntary. Our creative action is an accumulation of strength and patience.

## DISSOLVE THE I

We have already created the space. The space is the here; the time is the now. In the here and in the now am I. What remains is to attack the I. We have seen the prisons of time and space in which we live, prisoners of the I. And here is the most difficult part: to make the I jump. This is the most difficult of all. Because we identify so much with this I that we defend and because we anchor onto it, we do not want to change. We are stubborn, we are recalcitrant, we are impossible, we are a monster. Purely and simply, we are a monster that we do not want to let go of. We say: “This is the

way I am.”

The Romans and the Greeks said that the I was in the stomach; from there ideas are born, and they then take refuge in the brain. Other civilizations have put the I in the chest or in the nose. The I is hard to find. We entered into the work of shamans: the dissolution of the I. Actually, we see ourselves morphing, to use the terms of modern digital technology; we can animate ourselves and turn one image into another. That is to say, we must work to accept all the different changes in I, which is very difficult. Actors do this when they interpret a character, but they do not go very far because the actor is always the I and the character he interprets. But here we wish to enrich the I. And it is very easy. But no one can tell you how. If I open myself to the personality of everything, everything will talk through me. I convert myself into you; I convert myself into another. But how? In what way? I let you enter me and I express you. In this moment, I convert myself absolutely into the creator, because everything talks through me.

I am going to give an example. There is Cristóbal, my son, sitting in a wooden chair. I convert myself into him: “I am here sitting like a receptor of light, knowing that in infinite time, eternally before me, I am going to shine; that the light is going to show; that I am connected with everything.” Creativity consists in absorbing the other and expressing it—and not only in another, also in things. I convert myself into a chair: “I am happy because I like having someone seated on me. I play my role by being straight, and I am not weary; thanks to me he is here. Furthermore, my wood is not dead. There is not even one termite in me. I’ve preserved myself well. I maintain my strength, even though I am old. I am going to last a long time. Maybe I am going to last longer than him. He will disappear and I will still be here. There is no need to throw me out. I will support him. With my four legs, I am the material base upon which he can sit.”

When I began to study pantomime, the first thing they taught us was that to make gestures there is no need to make gestures. The principal of pantomime is to remain neutral. Later they will make all the gestures they want. At the same time, the basis of the imagination is to not have an imagination; it is to arrive at breaking everything imaginary. Then you can do what you want. If you do not crush the imaginary, there will always be parasites. Things are always moving in our imaginary worlds. We must cut off the internal dialogue and bring order to the emotional chaos, the invasion of desires, the undisciplined body. We must learn to dominate all of this.

## BE A DOT

You can do a very simple exercise: the simplest thing we can think about is a dot. Correct? Suppose we have a pencil or a pen, and we are going to draw a dot. We have to truly create a dot with all of our spirit, with all of our emotion, as if we are opening a dot in space. We make a dot. If it is possible to create the dot, we will do many things with it later. But we must truly concentrate on creating a dot. It is the first thing one does in karate. Karateists are capable of creating a dot, a point of mental and emotional concentration. We create an intense dot, as if this dot were all the energy of the universe: a dot of total energy. Everything should be there. We must use a lot of force to create a dot. We must do it with our whole being. All concentration is on the dot, a dot, a dot . . . That is all! Well, can we make a good dot, a perfect dot, a concentrated dot? Bravo, it is a good effort. Now, we observe. I have a dot here in my forehead. My whole mind is a dot. I am concentrated on only one dot. I have an emotional dot, I have a dot here in my chest, and in my privates, all over. I can move the dot. I can put it in my mouth, here, there, in my eyes . . . My will is a dot! That is all! Do this exercise.

Work with the dot. Concentrate on the energy of the dot. Introduce the dot into your bodies. It is like the exercise with space. Here all directions are concentrated at a point, the dot. All thoughts, all feelings, all desires. Once we've learned to make a dot, we can carry out any movement we want to. Whatever discipline we want to practice—dance, theater, karate, martial arts—everything is in place. Because it is no more than this: I make a gesture, and my intention goes there. I do what I do. Everything is concentrated, all my attention goes there, all my concentration is clear, precise. At heart, karate consists of creating a concrete point where one can hit, and that way one can break a table. But to develop the point takes years.

## FINE ARTS

Now we are going to sing, but in an imaginary way, without the voice. We will sing the most marvelous song. Sing the most beautiful song without sound! Imagine that you sing with a marvelous voice. Let's go. This is creativity. You have to sing like birds. That's how one learns. With concentration, with strength—do it! We're not just acting here . . . You can move, advance; don't be quiet. Sing! Put all the intensity of a great singer into it. Put all your talent into singing. You like it, right? It's wonderful. You can sing all you want in the most complete silence, with the mouth closed.

Okay, we've sung. Now we are going to create. Do what you can; I cannot give you what you do not do. As you sing, do it from deep within, with feeling, and everyone will do well, because you sing for the unconscious. Your unconscious is going to consider you singers if you sing like you know how to sing. The message goes to your unconscious, and it will be satisfied. You already know how to sing. Do you understand? Now, in my imagination, I can play the piano. You can use other instruments, but they are more difficult. We begin with the piano, using two hands, and then you can move to whatever instrument you want. Relax, play the invisible piano passionately and try to imagine that you are performing. Whatever you want, but play the piano. This exercise is wonderful. And when you tire of the piano, move to another instrument. And you will become your best. Go to the sublime with the music!

(An aside: Until now it was a child's game. Children play like that. But now it is going to be your profession. Now, be the best that you can be! Not like a diversion. When you play, feel only the best of your soul, so that the best of your self does the playing. Give the music a limitless spirituality. Play that. I ask you for the best spiritual beauty, the sublime. You are the most beautiful. You can seduce all of humanity with your music. It's no good to underestimate yourself; to the contrary, you must value yourself. This happens on its own. Begin, and then this happens. The concert could last all day. It's best to do these exercises until you master them. Little by little, with practice, they begin to awaken your creative capacities, until you achieve the sublime.)

## HAVE TALENT

Now I am going to propose a very simple exercise that will stimulate your talent. You do not have talent? Well, you're going to have it right away. There is no need to doubt yourself. I have talent when I have power. And I have power when I have the right to life or death over others. From this moment on, I have power. God is all-powerful, because he can kill when he wants to. And because he can create me when he wants to. And if I am alive, it is because he pardoned me. Then the capacity to kill, to pardon, is going to create the talent. It is simple. I imagine that I am a cobra, that I have venom

and that in front of me there is a monkey. I am in front of the monkey, concentrating, completely engrossed. I move, I look at it, I hypnotize it, and the monkey does what I want. It is an attitude of talent. I tell you the truth. I cause you to look at me. I cause you to be here. I have created you. There is no need for you to convert yourself into a cobra. Instead of always being a victim, the little rat that is always hypnotized, we pass to the other side. We are those who hypnotize others, okay? For this, we need to relax. Create a dot; make it rise. Then we balance ourselves because we are ready to jump, but we do not jump. We make like we are going to jump, but we do not jump. This is how we hypnotize the monkey. We do not bite it either. We only hypnotize it. You have to develop this capacity of the hypnotizing look. It is not to seduce; it is very different from seduction. With my mental concentration, I have the other in my power. Work this. This is talent. We are not attending a meeting of cobras, but a brotherhood of the wise who are like cobras, who respect one another because they know their knowledge is mortal.

Now try to go beyond your head to expel the force. Try to exceed the interior of your head: imagine that your eyes are thirty centimeters higher than the cranium and, feeling that you are a cobra, think about what we have below the belly button, two or three fingers lower, a point of concentration and that there is a force that exits from there toward the exterior, a force that can enter into others. In the belly. This is the Emperor tarot card. It is seated like that, and the force is there.

## DRAW

Now we will do an applied creativity exercise. Now that you have all the mental tools necessary—concentration, strength, all that we have studied in this course—you are going to imagine that you have a canvas of any size that you like. You have a paintbrush that changes colors according to your desire. And you are going to make a painting, an imaginary painting. You can draw, you can make large marks, you can change the colors—whatever you like. Then, seated in groups and making gestures, describe the painting you have painted. Okay? Begin! While you paint, you can put on imaginary music to guide you. If you want to be creative, create! And if someone has creative potential, may he continue, go along until something appears. To your unconscious, it is as if you have made a painting, you know? To the unconscious, what one has done in the imagination is the same as what is carried out in reality. In the nervous system, when one imagines something, the same connections are activated. What happens is that normal people do not propose to do such things, because they do not believe it. Really, if you want to be creative, you need to just do it. If I paint ten or twenty paintings like this, imaginary ones, then I will be able to do a real painting; I will be mentally prepared to paint. You see?

## SCULPT

And now, to finish with this series of exercises, make a sculpture. In space, the sculpture becomes. You can use whatever material: marble, gold, bronze, whatever you want. And create a figure, or if you want to go further, you can turn it into an abstract. Think about what sculpture you want to make. Be sculptors. We are going to be able to manipulate space creatively. It is important, because if you do not do this, you will have an undeveloped dimension. It is necessary to move around the object. Sculpture makes us abandon the fixed glance; it lets us develop our spirit as it spins around the created object. Once finished, we will describe it, because the commentaries are also important. Before starting to sculpt, really think about the material you are going to choose, it should be a

material that you like. You can also color it . . .

## FASHION DESIGN

In this exercise, we will create clothes. You can make a suit individually or else in a group. If you do it in a group, each one should make three pieces for the others. Take a good look at the other person and observe what clothing could call attention to him. It is not a criticism. Be daring and infuse the shape with strength, like in a carnival. Create imaginary suits. And you will see that, just as you can paint and sculpt or play music, you can create fashion. Daring to do it is all it takes. If after this exercise, they put you in charge of a fashion show, you can do it! It has to do with seeing how the other is. You can change the clothes, change the appearance; you can fill, take away; you are the owner of the other's look. You are his owner. We begin.

## THE RAINBOW

We are going to become more creative with a fundamental exercise. What I am going to do is count from nine to zero to concentrate your attention. You must pay attention, really listen. The best way to concentrate, the most simple, is to imagine the colors of the rainbow: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet. As I am counting, I first submerge myself in the red; then I see the red converting itself into orange, the orange converts itself into yellow, the yellow turns into green, the green turns into blue, then dark blue, then violet. The purpose of this is to occupy the mind and to not think with words. Feel the arrival of each color. Nine . . . eight . . . each time more concentrated. Seven . . . more concentrated. Six . . . deeper, deeper. Five . . . deeper, deeper. Four . . . deeper . . . Three . . . deeper, the listening, the concentration, the receptivity. Two . . . deeper . . . Now we are going to use the unconscious . . . one . . . we are going to use the unconscious . . .

## YOUR SPACE

In your interior you have space, the territory that you love. There is a territory that is yours. It can be at the foot of the mountain, in the country, by the ocean; it can be fertile ground, sand; whatever you want. Let your terrain arrive; imagine the ideal place for you. Do you see it? What is there? Is there shade? What does it smell like? Are there little insects? Other animals? Whatever there is, let it arrive. And in your territory, be happy, happy: because finally you have a territory the size you want. Small, large, each one has his own. It is crucial that the unconscious give you your plot. The land that belongs to you. The slice of the planet that is yours. The landscape in which you live. Do not choose the landscape of others. Do not choose that of your parents. Choose yours alone. Take the joy of your plot and observe how the house emerges, the interior that is yours. It is your ideal house, where you want to live and develop yourself, accompanied or not, all your life. What is the house you want? What size? Made from what? What is it like? Think about what your ideal space is. Without limits. When you're able to conceive this ideal house, walk around it, take a good look at it, go inside it and create everything: bathrooms, beds, the kitchen, the cups, the spoons—you are going to create all the objects in your ideal house and in all its rooms. Go for a walk and create your house once and for all! So you truly know what you want, without limits! There are no limits on money, there is not one prohibition, you do not have to be small or mediocre. Choose in your creativity what you really want, so that later you can carry it out in real life. Take your time . . . Think about what activities you wish

to do in your house . . . the materials . . . you are the Great Architect. Your own architect. Your own creator . . . Take all the time you need, because it is fundamental for you to know your territory. Your house is your ego, it is your true I. Think also about how you are going to be dressed in your house. What clothing corresponds to you? How do you want to present yourself? In the kitchen, dream up everything you wish to eat. What is your ideal nourishment? And concentrate on the ideal company. With whom do you desire to be? If you want to be with anyone at all. There can be a reading room, a movie theater, music, books, animals—all that you desire. Without limits. Imagine your bed in this ideal house.

And this part of the exercise is also fundamental, essential, so do it well. You are in the bed, lying down, but your life has ended. You are dead. And from your corpse your new being comes out and is reborn. How do you want to be reborn? You are lying down, a being, a body that has stopped, and you get up with a new body. With what physique? What gender? What age? What would be your ideal I? Imagine yourself as an ideal I. The I that we have is not our ideal I. We have an ideal, although it is still far away. Give yourself permission to imagine it. All these exercises are designed to eliminate the lack of confidence, to enrich yourself. If you have a plot, if you have a house, if you have an ideal being, you have enriched yourself.

Now criticize yourself the way a person in your family would. Your mother, your father, your brother. Talk with their voice. Put yourself in the position of someone who opposes you. Because if until now you had not imagined any of this, it is because inside you there are forces working against what you imagine. What are these forces? Embody them. For example, talk as your mother would talk. Or your father. And criticize. All of the new medicine talks of territory, saying that a loss of territory creates illnesses. Because the brain, they say, acts like an animal that needs its territory. Even though I do not believe that this is absolute. Therefore, when we know what territory corresponds to us, we take a big step toward creativity. And the house is the development of our individual I. And if I invent the house that I want for me, I allow myself to exist as myself. Outside of parents. For this reason, to talk with your parents or create a new body is a move of creative freedom that you make. Creativity comes from an interior freedom, from an internal appreciation. I know that I have all of this in my interior, so I can put myself into action. The imagination works on very simple principles.

## FREE YOURSELF FROM LANGUAGE

This will be a quick exercise in liberation from language. We are accustomed to always talking like normal beings. We are afraid of madness. However, the rivers that fall from the rooftops covered with doves will forever be white and dark, open to the tunnel of all delight . . . Did you understand? No? Yes? This is how you should speak; you should allow yourself to talk in a completely outrageous language to try to explain a feeling. You must create a conversation, communicate with a language that is verbal, that is not conceptual. Ready? You can raise whatever Samson you want, preventing Delilah from cutting his hair and, atop the table, declare three or four stories that will be deliciously sweetened. Okay? And what you have done with words, you can do to invent words, like this: *Fai faias naracola ke. Costrigunsun tostecki batcherome quelarranamanda droi pretcho apandep ketackka kieugal pathcu! Reabutchis Kara miop.* This is liberating. You can do it. Free yourself from the language. When you start doing this, you are going to like it. In the beginning you are going to feel cut off, because the largest prison is the articulate language, the logical language. It is a surrealist exercise. But it breaks the normal language to allow creative freedom. Maybe some things that come

out will be in bad taste, but it doesn't matter. Idiotic things, childish things. But beautiful things will also come out, suddenly. Try to do it, and then we will get into techniques for the imagination.

# SIXTEEN



## TECHNIQUES FOR THE IMAGINATION

The imagination operates on very simple principles. Some creators have used it to exhaustion. The basis of the imagination has four elements, which are like mathematical elements: addition, subtraction, division, and multiplication. These are the four elements of the imagination. First, there is addition and subtraction. Then division, next multiplication. And then, a mixture. And with these five things, you have the imaginations of crazy people. It is very simple. Using subtraction, you must take away from everything, in the imaginary, until everything becomes small. For example, one day you see someone pass by with a package, and in this package he carries his entire birthplace. You have an enormous imagination, because you have taken away from everything. You can miniaturize everything. In my left pocket, I can carry my mother; in my right pocket, I have my father. I make them talk, and then I look at them. This happened in the movie *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids*, so re-create this game.

One subtracts, subtracts—and one has to fight with the spiders. These are, to me, easy elements for the imagination. And they are very useful! But we also have the giants: this could be addition. You can enlarge a pumpkin. The typical example could be the pumpkin that grows and grows and reaches the size of the planet, converting itself into a planet. And then it is so big it occupies the galaxy. Inside the pumpkin, there is all of history; all of humanity is born. Anything can be enlarged this way. It is simple. Make whatever you want grow, make art. In architecture, you take three boxes of cherries; you raise them to make a building. This is how architects work. This is addition.

The imagination can increase or reduce. The Japanese imagination has created the small dwarf trees, or bonsai; the Jivaros shrink heads; the atomic bomb is an expansion of a small bomb; and cinema makes, for example, a monkey grow into King Kong or Godzilla. In my case, I have a comic strip called *Megalex*, about a city that occupies the whole planet, although I was not the first to do this.

Also the expansion of force is possible (*Superman*). All of the superheroes increase themselves in some way: for example, Flash Gordon is the fastest. A character who crosses over everything just with a look, or he who hears everything: this happens in fairy tales, too. Or the person who has the loudest voice and makes the buildings fall. There is the man who can sleep with three hundred women in a night, and so forth.

Imagine this: A horse passes in the street, and you think that there is an invasion, that horses are everywhere, that they are multiplying, that it is an epidemic. Now there are so many horses that we have to flee, because we are invaded. And at this point we can add another element: mixture. The horses convert themselves into carnivores, and it is necessary to escape because they are devouring the humans. This is the imagination. That is to say, the imagination has used the mixture. (But we were still talking about addition and subtraction.)

A person becomes very weak, very weak, so much so that it is necessary to tie her up with thread, like a marionette: she is the president, and she has to make a speech like that. Another example: a

person loses power and her bones turn into liquid, like water. We can imagine it.

There is a story in which a young woman has such long hair that her lover can climb up her braids. This could be addition to a gentlewoman. Expand. Reduce.

(Many of Ionesco's works are very simple. In one of them there is a woman who serves a cup of tea, and then another, and another—thousands of cups of tea. In another, there are mushrooms that grow—until the entire house is full of them. In another, a dead body grows and grows and occupies the whole stage. And in *The Chairs*, there is a chair, then another chair—until the entire stage is full of chairs. This is to say, the author does not have to have much imagination, because he simply uses the make-things-grow trick. In all of his works, there is something that he multiplies. This becomes the norm!)

Another element of the imagination is where something begins to decrease. Fuel is scarce, water is scarce. *Dune* is a planet where there is no water. Here is an entire work about a planet that does not have water. An element has been split. And in splitting an element of nature, you make an imaginary world. I am showing you the processes of the imagination, formulas that you can apply anytime to your world and be able to create. Expand, reduce. You can do it.

A telephone call, ten telephone calls, all over the planet the telephones begin to ring, the buildings fall, and there is a catastrophe. Through multiplication. By magnification. Then, division steps in: There is a hand that walks alone, it jumps on your neck and strangles you. And it escapes as if it were a spider. This is division. You are walking on the street, and you see two legs that walk without a body. In a study by Jung of the stories of Native Americans, he talks about a hero who wanted to make love to the chief's daughter. So, he sent his phallus through the water and the phallus alone made love to the girl, leaving her pregnant. In this way, he managed to marry her.

Multiplication. Some Hindu goddesses have multiple arms. And each hand has an eye. Multiplication of the arms. Ganesh has four arms. There is also a Greek god with three heads. In the *Odyssey*, the cyclops has only one eye, on the forehead. That is reduction. In the case of the third eye, there is one eye more. That would be multiplication.

And then, with these four elements, one produces a mixture: the Egyptian sphinx. It has a human head, a lion's body, an eagle's wings, a cow's tail. It is a monster. There are a number of examples in the paintings of El Bosco (Hieronymus Bosch), who often mixed elements. A centaur is a mixture of man and animal. You take an element of one and an element of another and join them. That is how monsters are created. An angel is a mixture of a human being and a bird with wings.

For a long time, I have been developing such mixtures. I imagined, for example, integrating the head of an elephant with a body that is a cloud, with four staircases for legs. This ability to mix elements presents interesting artistic possibilities, and the imagination uses them. These are techniques that we have at our disposal. Notice how we are always witnessing applications of this technique, in art, in publicity. If you master this technique, you can work in any advertising agency.

And there is another form of imagination, which is imaginary time. Time travel. On this trip, I can go into the past. But the problem is that, if I modify the past, I modify the "present" point from which I departed. This is called temporal paradox, and it has been developed extensively in science fiction. It is one of the great themes. If I go into the past and kill my mother, then I would not have been born, because she could not have had me. Time travel is a main theme in many films, popular films, like the *Back to the Future* series. In these, the imagination plays with time. But this has a very strong oedipal

foundation, because if I go into the past, I can seduce my mother and make her my girlfriend, and in this case I could father myself with my mother. Or I can seduce my father in the past. This is one purpose of time travel imagery. Interfering with the past signifies interfering with our parents.

Then there is eschatology, which is the imagined end of the world. In what shape does the world end: fire, water, epidemic, or ascending into another dimension? There is a large part of the imaginary that has to do with the end of the world. This I am not recommending to you, although I do it intensely: I imagine various ways to die. I have imagined myself dying in a drowning suicide, being thrown from a building, being cut in two. I have projected myself a lot in suicides, in death, to free myself a bit from myself. I repeat to you that I do not recommend this to you. If you are distressed, do not do it. It is hard. Above all, imagine the death of loved ones. It is hard, because the possibility of a loved one disappearing always exists, and also we fear the possibility of our ceasing to exist.

To eliminate this, I have imagined a lot. I have turned myself into nothing: that is what happens when one enters darkness. I have made myself imagine the blackness, deep blackness that dissolves my I into emptiness. And then, the emergence toward existence and light.

# SEVENTEEN



## THERAPEUTIC APPLICATIONS

We are going to work with feelings. Think about how you feel. What feeling do you have of yourself? Well, we live with feelings that sometimes are a little distressing. That is why I am going to show you how to work with feelings of distress. Does anyone here have a feeling?

“I feel as if I had a wall in my chest.” Listen hard, this is imagination. What is this wall like: made of stone, metal, cement? Concentrate, try to tell me what it’s like. Red bricks? Imagine that there are bricks at your disposal. It is a material that is yours; you can do what you want with this material. In the first place, it defends you: a wall can defend. Against what do you need to be defended? Look for the feeling. No need to think; just feel the feeling. This wall is completely useful. Now meditate on the red bricks. They are pretty. Think that they are pretty. Instill beauty into the bricks. Each time put more beauty into the wall, okay? It is yours; it pertains to you. You can do what you want with it. Build with it whatever you want. Make a walled-off place. But imagine it completely. Imagine what this place is like, with those bricks. See it as a friendly place. You can go inside. There, you have created a door. I have a solution: there is no need to eliminate the wall, only to open the door. And now, imagine the wall inside you, with a little door by which you can exit and enter. It is a part of you that preserves your individuality. This wall preserves your individuality because, for the moment, it is still weak. Okay? Now fortify your individuality. The red bricks are going to give you strength. If you make yourself strong, you will lose your fear. No one will be able to invade you. Do you understand? You must take the imaginary and incorporate it, work with the feeling. Because feelings that present themselves to us are like symbols, we can work directly with them.

A person told me that he feels that he has excrement in his heart, and I answered that the excrement is fertilizer, that he should think of adding earth to it and that anything can grow there. If the person can make something grow there, then the feeling changes.

“I feel like I have something on my shoulders, something that is crushing me.” Okay, someone feels like something is crushing her. Let it come. Do not defend yourself, okay? Change the feeling. Think that this comes from the interior and goes toward the exterior. Modify yourself. This emerges from your interior. Do you know what it is? Growing wings. So, let them grow. Push them! Push the wings that are going to allow you to go where you want to go. Create your wings and move your wings. Go where you like. Toward the earth, toward your territory, toward yourself, toward your fulfillment. This is how feeling works.

“I feel like there’s a ball of lead in my solar plexus.” Wonderful. Imagine that your body is an oven, an alchemist’s cauldron. Imagine: in another incarnation you are an alchemist. The ball of lead is the first material that is going to change you into gold. So, let this fall so it gets to the fire in the belly. The belly is the seat of the Great Work. Work, let the ball descend, instead of defending yourself, let it heat the fire of your sexuality, okay? Little by little, go about making it rise toward where it was, and as it is rising make it change colors, until it changes to golden, and gets to the

center of your chest. And then, let it shine—project its rays to all sides. Make it rise. And this way you make gold. What will you do with the gold? Currency, money. It is the acceptance of money in your heart. The negation of money turns into a knot. Do you have problems with money? Yes? Well, now you are going to have to make your money. If, upon making this ball rise, that weight, you feel too materialistic, convert the money into love. Love is the only creativity that gives you this kind of currency. Through the use of creativity, the feeling of distress will go.

“I have an itch in my head, thorns that plunge into me.” We are not going to ask what the thorns are. Simply accept the feeling, but without asking yourself why or what it means, because it can be the critical thoughts that they threw at you when you were a child, things like that. You are going to think that this leaves your head, not that it enters into your head. But you still need to really work with this feeling. And what leaves from your head is going to change into roses, because roses have thorns. And when you imagine that you have roses coming out of your head, imagine that insects come to pollinate them. And with the pollen, you are going to pollinate other plants in the world. And then you can write poems; you can do what you want.

All of us have to stop with this game of “Look what you did to me” or “You don’t love me.” It is a lack of creativity. We should not delight ourselves in the feeling of not being loved. Precisely, if I have a feeling of not being loved, I must change this feeling and feel myself loved. And what can I do? Well, to begin with, stop asking. If I stop asking for love, I am in a position to give it. So we say: “You do not love me, but I adore you.” And instead of spending my life angering myself and annoying others and suffering, I will say “Enough,” and the problem ends. I love you. I am not going to live as a victim all of my life. No. I love you, and this stops. If you do not love me, it is your problem not mine. There is the cure. When we are creative, we are not centered on asking for something; on the contrary, we make it ourselves. We should put love there where there is not love, and we will find it. Because, if you use another like a mirror of your lack of capacity to love, it is because you have looked to someone who does not love you, and this is because you cannot love. You are incapable of loving, and your problem of not loving you deposit on another, you project it like a mirror. Love. And if you love, the other is going to love you, because you are going to project your love to him.

We begin by loving things: art, people, our work, everything. We dedicate ourselves to creating and to loving. Because the other attitude drove me to do nothing, to being foiled at every turn. Creativity, on the other hand, drives you toward what you do, what you should do. And what you do, you project. And if you project it, you receive it back. Everything you give to the world, the world gives to you. Everything you do not give to the world, the world does not give to you. You need to free yourself, using creativity, from the appeal. Instead of saying “I want to have talent,” we should say, “I have talent!” Why would I want to have talent, if I have it? I want to have success. But if I have success, everything I want, I have. So, I stop asking, and I start doing my work. That is it! If I want to play music, I play it. If I want to sing, I sing. If I want to write, I write. If I want to gain money, I gain it. Period.

Because at our side are always the barriers that prevent us from fulfilling ourselves. Father, mother, true? It is this damn mind-set that has said to us: be a victim, live like a victim, and make yourself a victim. Pester another. But this is already the subject of another less accelerated course.

# Footnotes

[\\*1](#) For some years now, Jodorowsky has been hosting, without publicity, a conference-happening to deal with therapeutic themes every Wednesday in Paris. The event is free of charge; five hundred spectators attend each week. At the end of the Mystical Cabaret sessions, volunteers pass the hat to collect the money necessary to pay for renting the hall. Three days before the conference, and always free of charge, Jodorowsky reads the tarot cards for some thirty people. At the conclusion of each reading, the person who received the reading is required to trace the words “thank you” with their index finger in Jodorowsky’s hands as payment.

[\\*2](#) [Marjolaine, the name of the conference site, also means marjoram. —*Ed.*]

[\\*3](#) [Jodorowsky coined this term to define his specific kind of tarot reading. —*Ed.*]

[\\*4](#) [An ancient Chinese technique of self-massage. —*Ed.*]

# About the Author

[Alejandro Jodorowsky](#) is a playwright, filmmaker, composer, mime, psychotherapist, and author of many books on spirituality and tarot, and over thirty comic books and graphic novels. He has directed several films, including *The Rainbow Thief* and the cult classics *El Topo* and *The Holy Mountain*. He lives in France.

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