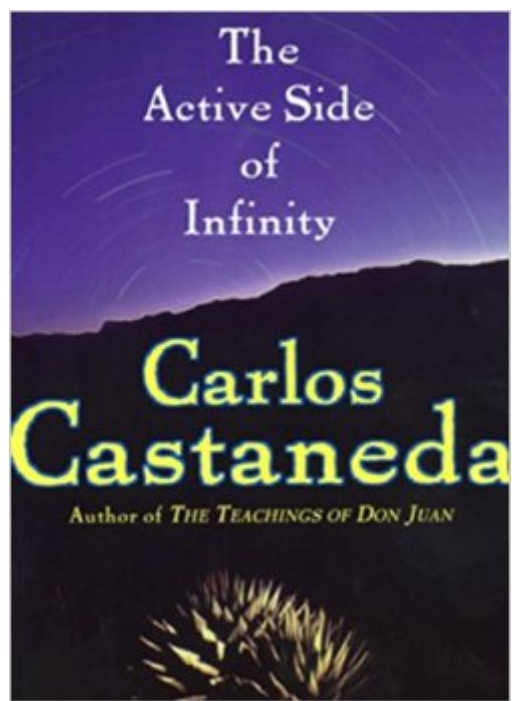


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The Active Side Of Infinity



Synopsis

"Ordinarily, events that change our path are impersonal affairs, and yet extremely personal. My teacher, don Juan Matsus, said this is guiding me as his apprentice to collect what I considered to be the memorable events of my life. Don Juan described the total goal of the shamanistic knowledge that he handled as the preparation for facing the definitive journey: the journey that every human being has to take at the end of his life. He said that what modern man referred to vaguely as life after death was, for those shamans, a concrete region filled to capacity with practical affairs of a different order than the practical affairs of daily life, yet bearing a similar functional practicality. Don Juan considered that to collect the memorable in their lives was, for shamans, the preparation for their entrance into that concrete region, which they called the active side of infinity." In this book written immediately before his death, anthropologist and shaman Carlos Castaneda gives us his most autobiographical and intimately revealing work ever, the fruit of a lifetime of experience and perhaps the most moving volume in his oeuvre.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Sometime in 1998, on a not-so unusual evening, my computer, once booting it up, seemed to explode in a dance of light and sound - my email had been inundated with the news that the famous author of 'The Teachings of Don Juan', Carlos Castaneda, had leaped into the abyss, never to return. The general response to his final passing, the commencement of his 'definitive-journey', was an ecstatic celebration: his work, it had been said, was finally complete. My feelings were mixed.

Castaneda had been a close 'literary friend', a quasi-spiritual companion who, through his many books, made me aware that all things are indeed possible. The 'warrior-traveller' had moved on, and it was rumoured that his last book, ~The Active Side of Infinity~ was on the way. It has been four years, and for a variety of reasons, I never got around to reading it, but finally did last week. To be sure, this last installment ranks, in my mind, as one of his best. This is the last in a long line of texts concerning Castaneda's apprenticeship as a sorcerer, working under the tutelage of Don Juan Matus - a 'nagual' of mystery, power and hilarious wit. Don Juan has to be one of the most interesting characters of the twentieth century. And to finally meet him again in ~Infinity~ was certainly a pleasure. ~Infinity~ has to be the most accessible of all Castaneda's books. We can almost categorize it as being his last will and testament before his final exit into infinity - an effort to pay off his spiritual debts as a warrior-traveller, recapitulating (Don Juan's term) memorable events and relationships in his life that changed his path or had, either consciously or not, affected or had a profound significance in his life as a sorcerer.

For many years now I have been following Carlos Castaneda in his literary journey into the supernatural world of sorcery. Taking a comprehensive look at all of his books, Castaneda's narrative "feels" like a cleverly-crafted tale of ambiguous meanings that captivate the imagination; the creative artistic work of a masterful surrealist author. What Castaneda does for his readers is the same as what a Van Gogh or a Dali does for their admirers but on a different level. Castaneda is the protagonist of his subjectivism, making of himself a mysterious and legendary character. He ventures forth from the world of commonsense into the regions of the supernatural. There, with the aid of don Juan, he encounters tremendous forces. After a fierce battle he comes out triumphant, returning from his subjective adventure with the knowledge which he bestows to his readers. With every new book, Castaneda introduces a new concept that supersedes others. For example, if the use of psychotropic hallucinogens was so important in don Juan's method of teaching, why did he stop writing about them in later books? On the other hand, if "Dreaming" was also such an important practice, why he did not talk about it from the very beginning? Why he did not mention the assemblage point in any of his first five books? Why did he wait until the end to introduce us to the practice of the "Magical Passes"? The reason is because over the years Castaneda appears to have borrowed from other sources, reformulating old concepts into new ones and accommodating his narratives to the spiritual undercurrents of the times.

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