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## Mexico City, Koans, and the Zen Buddhist Master: Alejandro Jodorowsky, Ejo Takata and the Fundamental Lesson of the Death of the Intellect

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### Abstract

In Alejandro Jodorowsky's autobiographical story *El maestro y las magas* (2006), the eclectic and esoteric artist spends a significant amount of time recounting his experience under the tutelage of Japanese Zen Buddhist monk Ejo Takata in Mexico City in the latter part of the 1960s into the early 1970s. Their relationship as master and disciple would be an important, if not foundational, part of his worldview, which would be omnipresent in his corpus. From the koans proposed by Takata to his own book of short koans and stories for contemplation, Eastern philosophy is inseparable from his own being or his search for his true Self, which is also a common theme in his work. Takata's four word lesson of "Intelectual, ¡aprende a morir!" ("Intellectual, learn to die!") is the nucleus around which all of Jodorowsky's oeuvre would revolve for at least his next forty-five years. Whether drinking warm sake and discussing Takata's childhood or telling how Takata was challenged by an arrogant American student, Jodorowsky's reverence for his master is pervasive and speaks of his dedication to the practices of Zen Buddhism. The monk, who usually dressed in his traditional robe, even participated in one of Jodorowsky's plays by sitting on stage in meditation during the entire length of the performance. The monk's influence would not end with Jodorowsky, as the artist himself would one day become the teacher and muse to many other popular artists, including Marcel Marceau, John Lennon, Marilyn Manson, Kanye West, and many others.

### Keywords

Eastern philosophy; Zen Buddhism; koans; mimodramas; antidisciplinary texts; prenarrative consciousness

*“Por un azar, que me atrevería a llamar milagro, un discípulo de Erich Fromm, célebre psiquiatra que acababa de publicar en colaboración con Daisetz Teitaro Susuki el libro Budismo zen y psicoanálisis, vio vagar por las calles de esa urbe de más de veinte millones de habitantes a un auténtico monje japonés... Maravillado, detuvo su automóvil, lo invitó a subir y lo llevó como regalo a grupo frommiano.”*

– Alejandro Jodorowsky on Ejo Takata's first day in Mexico City in 1967.

One of the most unexpected sights that one would anticipate seeing in the suburbs of Mexico's capital in the late 1960s would be a monk from Japan, but even less so, a Japanese monk dressed in his

traditional robes. It is there where Ejo Takata lived from 1967 until his death in 1997. Takata's presence was impactful not in his own direct effort to have a significant influence on the world, but indirectly through his relationship with Alejandro Jodorowsky. The Chilean-born artist was profoundly changed through his time spent with the Japanese monk and it is abundantly apparent in his artistic production. Indeed, it would be accurate to say that the fundamental teachings of Takata would become the nucleus around which Jodorowsky's *oeuvre* would revolve. The monk's influence would not end with Jodorowsky, as the artist himself would one day become the teacher and muse to many other popular artists, including Marcel Marceau, John Lennon, Marilyn Manson, Kanye West, and many others. As I expect will become apparent in this essay, it is uncommon to find an artist who has worked in as many mediums and genres as Jodorowsky. This artist, like his art, is very difficult, if not impossible, to classify precisely.

He grew up in Tocopilla, a port town of miners, sailors, and prostitutes at the time. He often felt alienated during his childhood. His parents' Russian and Jewish heritage were the cause of his exclusion from the social world of other children. In 1942 his family moved to Santiago, where he began developing his talent as an artist. He had an interest in circus puppets and also began to study mime at this time. The cinema was his friend, since he had no others. According to Benn Cobb, he attended Teatro Experimental de la Universidad de Chile for a while and left because he did not like it, but eventually returned. He left Chile in 1953 to study art in Europe. Cobb says he did not leave Chile because he did not like the country; to the contrary, he loved it. He left because he didn't want to become tied to the region. Jodorowsky says that he had a poor relationship with his mother that stemmed from problems in the relationship between his parents and that was also a part of his reason for leaving Chile.

In Paris, the young artist studied mime with Etienne Decroux, the teacher of Marcel Marceau. Jodorowsky and Marceau became friends and traveled the world presenting a pantomime show together. Jodorowsky wrote "The Cage" and "The Maskmaker," among others mimodramas for Marceau. He then moved to Mexico City in 1960 and directed more than one hundred plays in six years. He also drew a surreal comic strip, "Fábulas Pánicas," that was successful and lasted more than 200 weeks<sup>1</sup>. In each area of his work, he would find scandals and controversies. One of his greatest controversies came near the beginning of his career with the premiere of his movie *Fando y Lis* in 1968 in Acapulco, when a riot erupted in the theater during the showing of the film. Jodorowsky received death threats from other directors and the general public. In fact, he fled in his limousine while onlookers threw stones and bottles at the car.

It was during this time that he met the monk who would become his friend and teacher, Ejo Takata. The monk was born to a poor family who sent him to a monastery for training in the Zen Buddhist tradition. As Jodorowsky explains, “After living in this way for thirty years, in 1967 Ejo Takata decided that the times were changing. It was useless to preserve a tradition by remaining closed up in a monastery. He decided to leave Shofukuji and encounter the world” (*The Spiritual Journey* 3). The Zen Buddhist monk had arrived in California with nearly no possessions and no particular destination. Within days, he abandoned a monastery that he had found there because he said that its residents only recited memorized answers to the koans he proposed, instead of understanding the wisdom that rests behind the answers<sup>2</sup>. Takata climbed aboard a truck full of oranges with only his robes and twenty dollars in his pocket. He fell asleep at some point and awoke when the truck arrived to its destination in Mexico City. It was upon arriving there that, according to Jodorowsky, “by a coincidence that I would qualify as a miracle, he was seen wandering in the streets of this city of more than twenty million people by a man who was a disciple of Erich Fromm, the famous psychiatrist who had recently collaborated with D. T. Suzuki to publish a book called *Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism*” (*The Spiritual Journey* 3). He convinced Takata to go with him where he and others would offer the monk a place to live as long as they could study meditation and Zen Buddhism with him. They kept Ejo isolated and a secret from others. In a chance encounter with Fromm, Jodorowsky found out about the Asian visitor in Mexico City and asked if he could meet him. The Chilean artist says in *La danza de la realidad* (2001) that Fromm asked for a specific amount of money as a donation in return for access to the master. The amount is never revealed, but it is equivalent to everything that Jodorowsky has in savings. The director writes a check, Fromm gives him directions to the zendo, and he joins the group in meditation the next morning. While Jodorowsky struggled with the physical discomfort of meditation and being seated motionless for long periods, it seemed that the university professors and friends of Fromm remained comfortable and even managed a divine smile after hours of immobile meditation. After a few months, Ejo discovered that his students were using prescription medication to endure the meditative sessions instead of learning the rigor and discipline that he was teaching; thus, he left them. Jodorowsky, having been an earnest student, offered Takata a place to continue his teaching and the monk agreed. It was then that Jodorowsky says he really began to understand the challenge he had undertaken in learning Zen Buddhism:

There, the monk found his first honest students: actors, painters, university students, martial arts practitioners, poets, and so forth. They were all convinced that through meditation they would find enlightenment: the secret of eternal life that transcends

that of the ephemeral flesh. It was not long before we realized that Zen meditation was no game. To sit very still for hours, striving to empty our mind, enduring pains in our legs and back, and overwhelmed by boredom was a heroic undertaking. (*The Spiritual Journey* 4)

It was in that way that Takata became Jodorowsky's teacher, guru, friend, counselor, and mentor. Having ample, sincere, and eager students, the monk spent three years with the artist.

The precept of spiritual enlightenment becomes clear early in the book after an American appears at the door of their meditation center where Ejo Takata is teaching Jodorowsky and several others practices and lessons in order to cultivate this mysterious and elusive state of enlightenment. The American was a student of the Japanese monk when he lived in California briefly. The American student challenges the monk to ask him any of the traditional koans that are used to cultivate an enlightened state. The test begins and the challenger appears to answer all the koans in an acceptable manner, according to the reactions of Ejo. The American, to the offense of Ejo's current students, even slaps the monk as a sign of his spiritual superiority. However, in an instant, after having supplicated and deferred completely to the superiority of the wisdom of the American, Ejo jumps into the air delivering a kick to the chest of the challenger, drags him outside, douses the visitor's motorcycle with kerosene, pins him to the ground by pressing his foot across the American's throat, and challenges him with an ultimate koan: enlightenment or his motorcycle as he held a burning lamp above the now highly flammable motorcycle. The choice to be made was spiritual enlightenment or materialism. The challenger could demonstrate his enlightenment and nonattachment by sacrificing his motorcycle to a raging fire or demonstrate his attachment to the material world and keep his motorcycle. The defeated challenger chose his motorcycle and rode away humiliated and shown to be a fraud.

After this, Jodorowsky began a journey himself in trying to understand the koans more deeply. From the trash the poet retrieved a book of secret koan answers that the American had brought and which Ejo had thrown away. From this long-term exploration of koans, was born what seems to be the most essential and powerful lesson he would receive. One day the artist and monk sat down to talk about the koans. Ejo asked Alejandro several koans to which Alejandro could mostly only intellectualize answers, that is, offer rational and logical explanations born of the intellect. A bit frustrated, the master, admonished him by a customary strike from his baton and bellowing, "¡Intellectual, aprende a morir!" (Intellectual, learn to die!) (*El maestro y las magas* 38, my translation).

The student was offended but his tenacious teacher insisted on continuing the lesson until Jodorowsky came to understand.

The Japanese monk and the disciple continued their work with the koans. After more play and a role playing session, the artist finally made a breakthrough. Ejo posed the question to him of how to retrieve a stone from the bottom of a deep pond without wetting his sleeves. At the impossibility of resolving the problem with intellectual thought, Alejandro had an important realization that came from the space between the thoughts:

Now I understood: This stone was me, identified by my name, my imagined limits, my language, my memory. To remove the stone from the bottom of the ocean—the world as it is, an inexplicable dream meant removing my identity in order to realize that it is illusory, seeing that there is no difference between master and disciple, for one is the other and all apparent multiplicity is eternal unity. (*The Spiritual Journey* 21)

He had understood the fundamental lesson of non-duality. Ejo bowed to him as a disciple does to his master and brought a bottle of sake from the kitchen, which they shared in celebration of his new understanding. They asked and answered koans until they had drunk two bottles of the warm oriental beverage and then finally said goodbyes in the street. However, Jodorowsky was stunned at the end of their farewell when his teacher relinquished his authority and told his student to see another teacher better suited to his needs, English-born Mexican artist Leonora Carrington.

In *El maestro y las magas*, the central theme, as I have pointed out in previous work, is the death of the intellect. This is to say that what is central to this work and virtually everything that he produces is aimed at breaking free from the limitations of the paradigm of reason. This, I believe, is most clear in *El maestro y las magas*. This precept of spiritual enlightenment becomes clear from the beginning of the book and the cultivation of deeper and greater knowledge based on Eastern tradition has an integral part. Indeed, after the American is shown to be an imposter, Jodorowsky confesses to his master that he has no idea how Ejo had known that the challenger of his authority was only pretending. What Takata proposes to the student is that the greater wisdom and understanding that he seeks resides outside of intellectual ideas and concepts. Reason and logic cannot not resolve the questions posited in search of the essential Self. The intellectual, reasoning mind would have to be subdued in order to gain any real knowledge. Intellectual thought would have to cease so that the koan could be perceived in its entirety and its full effects *experienced*. All intention at understanding through reason could only ever result a fragmented or splintered perspective.<sup>3</sup>

This is also the purpose of the famous koan that asks, what is the sound of one hand clapping? When Ejo puts this koan to his former American student, his response is incomprehensible to Jodorowsky and the rest of the group. Logically, one would imagine the sound of two hands clapping and then intend to imagine just one. The process usually involves the visualization of one hand waving through the air searching for its missing counterpart or the use of some surrogate object to complete the clapping action. Through reason, the answer to the question is, at best, unsatisfactory. This is because, as Ejo explains to Jodorowsky about other koans the American answered, “Zen does not seek philosophical explanations, but rather demands immediate understanding beyond words” (*The Spiritual Journey* 5). What happens after a koan is presented is a type of mental paralysis due to the intellect’s inability to reasonably resolve the koan. This paralysis actually serves a greater purpose, which is to return to prenarrative consciousness to a spaciousness of mind that is outside of the limiting intellect that seeks to fragment and splinter reality. The purpose of a koan is to create gaps between thoughts.

Although Jodorowsky had only recently met Takata when his first movie premiered, his second movie was heavily influenced by Zen Buddhist teachings<sup>4</sup>. The scandal created by *Fando y Lis* created an opportunity for him to produce and direct his most known work, the film *El topo*,<sup>5</sup> in 1970. *El topo* is a symbolic representation of Sufism mixed with the *Bhagavad Gita*, several Jewish and Christians works, and *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1883) by Friedrich Nietzsche in the format of the Italo-Western movie.<sup>6</sup> In the film a cowboy rides a horse through the desert in search of enlightenment. It was during this time that Jodorowsky studied meditation and Buddhism with Ejo. During this period, Alejandro also studied Taoism and karate. His film seems to be a representation of who he was at that time, as he does say, “In every movie, I put everything I am, also what I am not. Searching. Everything is a search. A search for expression, for knowledge, of emotions... *El topo* is one man’s search for enlightenment” (Cobb 71). It is clear that his search for a true or essential Self was well underway and that his work with the Zen Buddhist master had had a significant impact on his artistic production.

Due to his success with *El topo*, Jodorowsky developed a friendship with the British icon John Lennon, who asked him to translate the lyrics of his song “Imagine” to Spanish.<sup>7</sup> Lennon would later find an investor, Allen Klein, for the next film by the Chilean artist. With the investor that Lennon helped to find, the director was able to make *The Holy Mountain* (1973). Additionally, there is a rather long list of artists who claim to be fans of *El topo*. Older artists like David Lynch, Peter Gabriel, Bob Dylan, and Roger Waters, as well as more recent performers like Marilyn Manson and Kanye West. In Brooklyn, New York, in November 2013, Kanye West talked in one of his now infamous concert

monologues about Jodorowsky's creative genius. West cited Jodorowsky's film *The Holy Mountain* (1973) and complained that many people had copied Jodorowsky's work. In fact, West himself had copied his work and used part of *The Holy Mountain* as the basis for his choreography and scenography on his 2013 "Yeezus" tour. Jodorowsky's relationship with Takata had a far reaching impact.

Even though the artist has served as muse to many other commercially successful artists, which for some would be a zenith in and of itself, he has yet to stop producing art in its many forms and stays consistent with the topic of the search for Self. In his novel *Las ansias carnívoras de la nada* (1995), he continues an expression of that same search and extends the lesson of the value of returning to a pre-narrative consciousness and a spaciousness of mind in order to find greater meaning in a highly structured world. The author's understanding of the world and existence is based on the deconstruction of identity that Robert Neustadt describes as "perpetually [exploring] psychic conundrums that revolve around 'place' and 'identity'. Who am I? Where am I? Where do I come from? Where am I going?" (84). The fourteen chapters present a group of heroes that has neither name nor identity. The protagonists are three people who travel together and share an eye. They are covered with several garments and the reader must struggle to visualize or identify with them. The characters, the subject, and the purpose of the book are all indefinite. It creates a type of confusion and incomprehension that serves the purpose of Jodorowsky: the deconstruction of form and the disorientation of the reader.

Rather than present a hero with which the reader can identify, Jodorowsky creates a tri-figured hero of three people who are nondescript to the point that the reader finds himself tested in trying to visualize them.<sup>8</sup> As Robert Neustadt says, "[Jodorowsky] condenses a confusing series of oneiric and hallucinatory experiences within a short narrative that is devoid of any historical or even logical anchor" (83). The lack of description is disorienting and leaves the reader searching for points of reference in order to understand and identify or corroborate the work with reality somehow. The vagueness of this novel isn't coincidental, but rather serves a similar purpose to the koans, the cessation of rational, lineal thought through debilitating paralysis. If we understand reason as discipline in the sense that it gives order and structure, we can feel how disorienting *Las ansias carnívoras de la nada* is and comprehend what this means for the author's work. Neustadt explains, "Whereas discipline in [Michel] Foucault's paradigm 'clears up confusion', [Jodorowsky attempts] to utilize (con)fusion against discipline. Superimposing literary, artistic and theatrical signs, they contest the compartmentalizing confinements of discipline. They create, to coin a phrase, 'antidisciplinary' texts (17). This is to say that Jodorowsky uses the vagary of nondescript heroes, among many other

techniques, to force the reader's intellect into surrender and in the process creates a new type of writing that affects the consciousness of the reader while reading. As the reader tries to imagine the heroes so as to potentially identify with them, there is such an indistinctness and lack of detail that the intellect cannot process it.

In the case of the author in question here, one should understand that his readers, as do readers of most any other author, have come to expect works that revolve around the issue of identity, spirituality, and the search for Self. Thus, it is no surprise that we would find references and lessons from other parts of the world in this novel. His experiences and studies, as mentioned before, cross various spiritual traditions and this is seen in *Las ansias carnívoras de la nada*. For example, Jodorowsky spent time studying Taoism and Taoist philosophies or teachings appear in the novel. For a moment, when the General appears on the television, he explains to the audience a lesson very similar to the first lines of the *Tao Te Ching*, the fundamental text of Taoism:

El camino más corto entre vosotros y yo, es el más largo. Si me tenéis, no me recordáis; si me recordáis, no me alejáis; si me comentáis, me adulteráis; si me definís, os mentís; si me buscáis, me perdéis; si me veis, os veis...

(*Las ansias* 77)

In terms of the intertextuality present in the novel, we find a lesson about the impossibility of talking about the origin of everything directly. The first lines of the *Tao Te Ching* also explain to us, "The name that can be spoken of is not the constant way; The name that can be named is not the constant name" ( I, 1). In the General's monologue above, the General, who represents the origin for which the protagonists search throughout the novel, tells his viewers that the spoken word only adulterate him and that any attempt to define him would be inaccurate. This search for origin or the essential Self means that the intellectual proposition of defining is a limiting act related to the fragmented perspective/knowledge which is produced by the intellect. Attempting to understand through reason and its paradigm is problematic for Jodorowsky, as he seeks a unified or whole perspective that is found in prenarrative consciousness. It is in this state that one finds creative power.

In one episode of *El maestro y las magas*, La Tigresa (Irma Serrano), a collaborator and onetime enemy of the author who was widely believed to use black magic to exact revenge and achieve success, places a gold ring adorned with a skull on the middle finger of his left hand. That night he felt that the ring was emitting some kind of noxious gas or vapors. His hand became cold and his arm began to ache. As much as he tried he could not remove the ring. At five in the next morning he drives

frantically to Takata's apartment in hopes of getting help for what he believes is a type of curse that La Tigresa has placed on him. Jodorowsky recounts that:

When I arrived, I found Ejo Takata meditating on the terrace under a dawn sky streaked with red clouds. I stood facing him, waiting for the incense stick to burn down. Finally, he seemed to notice my presence. His look went not to my face but directly to the gold ring. I made a helpless gesture. Smiling, he arose and removed the ring from my finger without the slightest effort. The pain in my arm vanished. "If you see it as a skull, your arm will hurt, but if you are unattached either to its form or its name, it is simply pure gold. Clear your mind and this ring will be a ring-and you will be yourself". (*The Spiritual Journey* 79)

With the situation alleviated the teacher told him that if he sees it as a skull, his arm will ache. However, if he doesn't attach himself to the form or the name, it is only pure gold. Ejo is giving the author a lesson on narrative creation and the importance of prenarrative consciousness where there is no meaning other than that found in objective reality. In that place, Jodorowsky has the creative power to assign whatever meaning he wishes. Instead, Jodorowsky had created a narrative that gave the ring power over him and his well-being based on the narrative that La Tigresa had created for herself as a *diablero*.

This place of prenarrative consciousness that exists before language and thought can be found in the present moment. It is in the now, without re-membering the past or projecting a future that the Self can be uncovered. He says, "The only happiness consists in being what one is. There is no other happiness. The greatest punishment is not living in the present" (Iribas 633). This is the spiritual journey of Jodorowsky and the essence of his work, a journey from unhappiness and suffering related to memories of the past and fears of the future.

The origin that Jodorowsky seeks in the space between the thoughts is to be found in the present moment. It is there that one finds agency for living and creating. Jodorowsky insists that he has no identity, only that which others project, which he usually seeks to avoid. In an interview, when asked how he performs psychomagic acts or tarot consultations, he responds that "I simply am not, there is the other. I disappear" (Iribas 630). He notes that it requires no effort on his part, that it is not a matter of doing, but quite different: "I don't do anything. In other words, I put myself in a listening attitude, and I listen. And the other is what he is, or what he is being, without my intervention" he explains (630). This is the origin that continually appears in his work, the purpose of

his quest, the restless search of the discontented for what has been lost which Philip Edwards discusses when he speaks of the metaphorical journey. It's a journey to the present that heals.

It is in the present where one finds what it is that is needed. The author speaks of "a state of attention to what is important, leaving aside the superfluous. That's all: a state of extreme attention" (631). This extreme state of attention is outside of time. This can be seen in the problem of amnesia that the three protagonists suffer throughout *Las ansias carnívoras de la nada*. They have no past and cannot project a future because of this. Neustadt points out that in "Capítulo 10", a memory is invented for them by soldiers in order to force a confession. According to Neustadt, this also happens in Jodorowsky's 1965 drama *El túnel se come por la boca*, where three policemen invent a memory in order to help coerce a confession (124). It is interesting to note that socially assigned authority figures are the ones who are creating the memory/identity. This leads one to interpret Jodorowsky's message as being that identity is a construction, just like the personal narratives that create who we are. Jodorowsky explains, "Actually, we're not what we are, but rather what the others want, in the beginning. Gaining insight is simply becoming what one is. The only happiness consists in being what one is. There is no other happiness" (633). Here we see a connection between happiness and becoming our true Self.

This process of becoming, the transformation, is a journey and is, among many things, a creative act, one that heals and transforms. This journey is a process or (re)writing one's life. Just as Neustadt points out that amnesia in *Las ansias carnívoras de la nada* is an allegory for the disorientation caused by the postmodern condition, he elaborates saying that:

With the fall of grand narratives we have forgotten where it is we were going. In the ecstasy of semiotic glut we can no longer remember how to read the texts whose interpretation might point a way out of this place. Signs have been hewn from their referents, and we wander aimlessly in a hyperreal (con)fusion of images reproductions and copies. (124)

That is what Jodorowsky provides, direction by provoking his readers and showing them how they can write a new personal narrative which assigns them agency to be Creator/creator. Neustadt says, "Only when one consciously directs one's own 'reading' can a reader become a subject, rewriting one's own text" (125). That is, his work teaches readers, through modeling in works like *El maestro y las magas*, how to become their true Self in order to find greater happiness and creative freedom in his or her life.

This creative freedom to rewrite our personal narratives, that is, our identity and who we are, is clearly a part of his more recent work as well. In his film *La danza de la realidad* (2014), he continues to demonstrate to his followers the process of inner work, but with an additional component that he has yet to address as directly as he has in the film, healing. It seems that he has made a transition from the search for Self and, firmly living in the present moment, is rewriting his personal narrative and the story of his family as a healing act. The film tells, in Jodorowsky's surreal and allegorical style, his and his family's story of living in Tocopilla, Chile. In his own psychomagical act of healing, the octogenarian cast his son to play his father, thus using a beloved member of his family to embody his father in order to complicate and problematize the negative impact his father had had on him. In an extra titled "My Father's Father", his son, Brontis Jodorowsky, tells of the powerful impact it had on him to watch his father crying at times while recreating, reliving, and rewriting his painful past. Additionally, it seems that, if the movie is a healing act for him and his family, he has indoctrinated his sons in this tradition as one other son, Adan, plays an anarchist and another, Axel, plays the part of a spiritual guide known as Theosophist. The artist also gives voice to the injustice inflicted on others throughout the film, such as the maimed miners who sing about their fate as they are hauled away to the dump, being of no use to the mining town. He heals through giving voice to the maimed, both physically and emotionally, so that there might be reconstruction or rebuilding.

Just as Ejo explained to him that the ring he received as a gift from La Tigresa would have whatever meaning he ascribed to it, Jodorowsky demonstrates to his family and viewers that we create our identity and it can be rewritten as a creative, healing act. It seems that he may be working within this trajectory as he recently released his movie *Poesía sin fin (Endless Poetry)* (2016), which continues to tell his story. At such a comparatively advanced age, he still has the initiative and drive to produce art that promotes the fundamental lessons he learned in Mexico City in the early years of his career. Although he doesn't speak directly of koans and enlightenment, they are still at the core of his worldview. At this point, it is difficult to say what he will make next, but, in being present in the now, it most likely won't matter for Jodorowsky as long as he is still able to be a creative force.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This surrealist comic strip appeared in a conservative newspaper (*El Heraldo de México* [1967-1973]) that didn't understand his message until his drawings had gained popularity with readers. The newspaper wanted to discontinue publication of the strip but could not because of strong public support for the work.

<sup>2</sup> A koan is typically a story, question or statement in Zen Buddhism that is not comprehensible through reason. Rather, it is best and most easily grasped through intuition. Traditionally, it is presented to the student who will then meditate, analyze and then propose a response to the koan, usually after a significant period of time.

<sup>3</sup> I propose that the intellectual mind is powerful enough to formulate a very large number of perspectives of any single object of study. It seems able to fragment and splinter to vast degrees. To substantiate this one it only needs to consider the various contesting viewpoints in any field of study.

<sup>4</sup> His first movie was the dystopic *Fando y Lis* (1968). It premiered at the 1968 Acapulco Film Festival.

<sup>5</sup> *El topo* became a cult film that initiated the phenomenon of midnight matinee in New York, which became associated with the movies *Pink Flamingos* (1972) and *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975), among others (Cobb 14).

<sup>6</sup> Italo-Western is a more accurate and less derogatory name for the commonly used term "Spaghetti Western".

<sup>7</sup> Jodorowsky never translated the song.

<sup>8</sup> It might be helpful to confess to the reader that while reading this novel, it was difficult to conceptualize the heroes. In fact, there was a sense of revelation when I saw an alternate edition of the book with three indistinct, faceless figures drawn on the cover. Even this image, as vague as it was, provided more defining mental imagery than the author in his novel.

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