

PRIMARY POINT

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School Abbot: Master Dharma Teacher
Lincoln Rhodes
School Director: Diana Clark
Teaching Editors: Master Dharma Teachers
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Contributors to this issue: Ruth Klein, Mu Soeng Sunim, Do Mun Sunim, Joan Insa, and Ken Stateman.

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CORRECTION

The Poetry page of the July 1985 issue of PRIMARY POINT omitted the very important information that these poems (translations from Rainer Maria Rilke) were taken from Stephen Mitchell's "Sonnets to Orpheus," scheduled to be published by Simon & Schuster in October 1985. Our sincere apologies to Stephen Mitchell.

Time is the least thing we have of.
Ernest Hemingway

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ENLIGHTENMENT IS NOT LIKE A BRILLIANT IDEA

by Da Free John

This article by Master Da Free John was sent to us by Ken Stateman of Laughing Man magazine and Dawn Horse Press. Ken studied with Zen Master Seung Sahn for two years in 1977-78 and recently published an interview with him in Laughing Man. We hope our readers will enjoy Master John's article, capitalizations and all, and see how uncannily similar to Zen teaching it is.

Ken sent us the following biographical notes: "Da Free John was born Franklin Albert Jones into a middle class family in Jamaica, NY in 1939. He was illumined at birth and awakened into full enlightenment 31 years later. Soon after his God-realization, he was moved to teach others and transmit to them the condition of "the heart," or the transcendent reality in which everything inheres.

Da Free John has described his life as an "experiment" in which he tested every possible experience and found that none contained the ultimate truth. He discovered that by his search he obstructed the truth that was his natural condition—and that of all human beings. Thus, his life adventure provides a demonstration of his radical message that truth can only be realized presently and not attained by any means.

He has instructed students for 12 years, and the wisdom he imparts has been recorded and distilled in 40 volumes. He has established an entire culture and teaching clarifying and serving the means whereby anyone with serious interest can enter into the process of spiritual transformation."

MASTER DA FREE JOHN: I have been asking people questions all week based on this consideration of Ignorance. I have involved myself profoundly, and yet when I ask a question that is directed at the heart of it all, the response is, "I don't know." These "I don't know's" do not amount to this Ignorance I am talking about. People have yet to Realize their Ignorance. When I ask them to elaborate on their response, they always have more to say. There is always more knowledge, hiding, lurking, ready to trample the unsuspecting Infinite at any moment. (Laughter.)

Knowledge sells. There are all kinds of amusements to be played. If you have a really good amusement that you know nobody else really knows too much about, you package it. That is knowledge. Ignorance is an entirely different matter. Nobody has ever thought of promoting it before, which shows how odd I really am. (Laughing wildly.) Nevertheless, this is what I propose. (Laughing.)

Perhaps somebody has thought of all this before, but have they ever been Ignorant of it? (Laughter.) To have thought of it is to know something, but to realize that you are completely Ignorant of it is an entirely different matter in which even the speaker is confounded. Now, why do you suppose all of this has been obvious to me and not to you? How is it possible? There is no way

you could have known your Ignorance, you see. You had to be put in an entirely different position relative to your knowledge before you could recognize your Ignorance to be the foundation and the Truth of your knowledge. Why was this not obvious, however? And who could have possibly instructed me in this? (Master Da chuckles.) It is not possible at all. I have never been instructed, and now you are just as Ignorant as I am. (laughter.) If I had been instructed, I might know something, but I have never been instructed, never even lived, and yet somehow I am here.

STUDENT: Master, does this Realization not require any attention at all?

MASTER DA FREE JOHN: No, it does not mean anything, however meaningful it may appear to be. There is nothing to be known about it.


STUDENT: Right. (Laughter.)

MASTER DA FREE JOHN: Have you been Ignorant of all this all of this time? Do you know anything about it? Do you Realize this Ignorance to be exactly what you are? When you are simply being that, completely Ignorant, you are not un-Happy, are you? Not at all. There is no possibility of being un-Happy in that case. You are completely Ignorant of the possibility of un-Happiness. (Addressing another student) Do you see this?

STUDENT: No, Master.

Continued on next page

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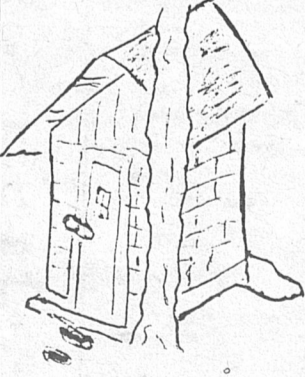



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TEMENOS COMPOSTER

MASTER DA FREE JOHN: You do not? You are Ignorant of it entirely, is that it?

STUDENT: Yes.

MASTER DA FREE JOHN: You see? That is exactly your position. You do not know anything about it. You do not know what it is, do you?

STUDENT: No.

MASTER DA FREE JOHN: Exactly. That is really your experience, is it not?

STUDENT: Yes.

MASTER DA FREE JOHN: That is what you are. You are Ignorant. That is the Truth of all of this. You see, you have always been Enlightened, but you do not know anything about it, do you?

STUDENT: No.

MASTER DA FREE JOHN: That is it. Do you see?

STUDENT: Yes.

MASTER DA FREE JOHN: Good. It is easy to Enlighten people, impossible to make them change. (Laughter.) If Realizing one's Ignorance depended on change, on a capacity for effort of any kind, Ignorance would never be Realized. If it could be Realized by effort, it would have to be a kind of knowledge. Nothing, however, is required. Anyone can be Enlightened. It makes no difference. It makes all the difference. You could see what a difference it makes. You do not have to sit under a bodhi tree in order to Realize Ignorance. I have not Realized this by sitting under plants. (Laughter.) What difference does it make if you starve the body, stuff the body, kundalini the body into distraction and vision, pre-vision, pre-know, after-know, if you speak it, do not say it, are silent or terribly crude (laughter)—it makes no difference whatsoever and does not lead to this Realization at all. None of your experience leads to it. I have led you to it, whatever it could possibly be. (Laughter.)

Enlightenment is not a matter of the point finally being made. It is not a concept, a brilliant idea. Perhaps at some point, it will simply be Obvious beyond your possible imagining. It is simply a matter of Realizing it. After all is said and done, you do not know what anything is. You are completely Ignorant, and nothing that has arisen in your mind or experience has ever been knowledge. Therefore, consider that and do what you will.

Do you understand what I am saying? You do not understand it? You do not know anything about it? (Laughter.) You have not grasped it. It has not become knowledge. Exactly. You are entirely Ignorant of it. You know nothing about it, nor about anything else. It has always been obvious to me that in your case nothing like knowledge was present. Now it is even obvious to you. (Laughter.) It is not that you are stupid, you are completely Ignorant. (Laughter.)

You are in a Condition of complete Ignorance. You have been playing, acting, living, but you do not know what your experience is. You do not know what anything you do is. You are always thinking—there are all kinds of implications to think about—but you do not know what the thinking is. Nothing arising is anything about which there can be knowledge. There is no such thing as knowledge. Knowledge is merely the illusion at the end of seeking. True Realization, on the other hand, is that all that seeking is fruitless, that there is no knowledge that can ever be attained.

That very Ignorance is precisely your Condition and the Condition of everything, and you are completely free of the whole affair. Insofar as it continues to arise you can play it exactly as you like. Knowing the consequences of the various kinds of action, you can exercise preferences and it will make no difference whatsoever. You will still know nothing about it. You will know nothing more about the absolute ultimate Divine Vision than you know about this glass of water. You are and you always will be completely Ignorant of what it is. It may mean a lot, but you do not know what these meanings are. You do not know what they are. You see? You are completely Ignorant. This is absolutely true, and that is the Truth. (Laughter.)

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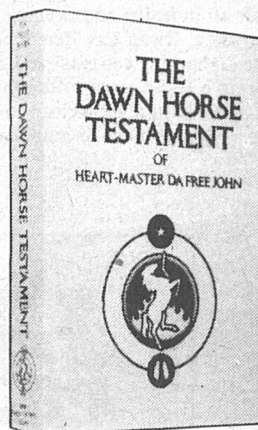
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DA FREE JOHN



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There really is not anything else to realize, once this Ignorance is fully Realized. When it is fully Realized this becomes a complete Mystery. Nothing can be known about the process of that Realization, but you can consider this Argument in its various forms, and one day it will suddenly be Obvious.

In any case, you still have not the slightest knowledge of what I am, what it is, what this is. You do not know what it is at all, do you? To be without knowledge is also to be without certainty. The absence of certainty in the most positive sense is the sign of Ignorance.

Knowledge is the illusion. What is knowledge? It is like a prize that no one ever receives. Even ordinary knowledge is just manufactured meanings, interpretations,

It is easy to enlighten people, impossible to make them change.

things arising. It is not based on experience at all. Your experience is complete Ignorance. You do not know what anything is. It makes no difference what happens, you still do not know anything about it. To notice this with the full force of your being is Enlightenment. It is only then that you step out of the stream of experiencing, of knowledge. Knowledge cannot be summarized. It can only be completely undone in the Realization of prior Ignorance. Thus, there is no "high knowledge" that is meaningful. There is nothing like that. You know nothing.

Enlightenment is so simple. It is only a matter of Realizing this Ignorance. Realizing Ignorance brings the entire complication of this manifestation to an end even while it continues. It does not become single, it becomes a paradox, a Condition of which there is no knowledge whatsoever. Do you know what I am talking about?

STUDENT: No, Master.

MASTER DA FREE JOHN: Good! I suspected as much. In saying all of this I have not known anything whatsoever. Therefore, how could you know anything more as a result of listening to me? You do not. You see? You are as Ignorant now as then. You have understood nothing. Even if you had understood something it would make no difference because you do not know what it is. Do you?

STUDENT: No.

MASTER DA FREE JOHN: Well, what about it? Is this consideration at all illuminating? Could anything possibly be illuminating? Have you ever heard anything illuminating?

STUDENT: No.

MASTER DA FREE JOHN: What do you think it would be like to hear something illuminating? You do not know.

Are you and the person next to you the same person? (Laughter.) Do you really know? Do you know? Do you know what you are directly enough to differentiate it from the person next to you?

STUDENT: No.

MASTER DA FREE JOHN: As a matter of fact you do not know anything about it. You do not know what you are. Do you? Exactly.

Could there possibly be any knowledge?

STUDENT: No.

MASTER DA FREE JOHN: Exactly. I am talking about Realizing this Ignorance, not just thinking about it. Sadhana is essentially the consideration of this Argument until there is enough free attention that it becomes completely Obvious. The Argument

appears in many forms. Ignorance is just one of the versions of it.

Since you have learned nothing this evening there will be nothing to remember tomorrow, except perhaps to consider this Argument in summary. I have always told you that there is no experience, no path. I always told you this. I am not saying anything different now, am I?

When you Realize that this Ignorance is the same as Consciousness, when you completely Realize this Ignorance, then everything begins to become Obvious in a remarkable way. Enlightenment is not a matter of quieting the mind. It has nothing to do with any of those conventional processes. It has nothing to do with any process at all. You may be thinking right now, but that has nothing to do with this Ignorance. In the midst of your thinking you still know nothing about what anything, including your thinking is.

Your fundamental position, then, is always one of not knowing what anything is, complete Ignorance. Even when you know about something, you are completely Ignorant of both the knowing and the thing itself. Knowledge has nothing whatever to do with you. You are not something that has knowledge or requires it. So what is wrong? What is there to be un-Happy about?

STUDENT: Nothing, Master.

MASTER DA FREE JOHN: Absolutely. You see? A certain manliness comes with Enlightenment because obviously the body dies, all these changes inevitably occur. Enlightenment does not change any of that. Perhaps by pattering around with your experience, your circumstances, you can change it a little bit—that would be amusing, or perhaps it would not be. Decide for yourself. In any case, the changes you may effect have nothing whatever to do with this Realization. This Realization brings an end to everything altogether and, paradoxically, everything essentially remains.

Make no assumptions whatsoever about knowledge. Know that you exist as a complete Mystery. That is precisely what you are, in fact. It is not that the state you are in must be changed—it is Enlightenment. That is the secret. You see? It could not possibly be otherwise.

STUDENT: Yes, Master...or do I?

MASTER DA FREE JOHN: Do you at least know that you know nothing about it? This is true, is it not? That is why the Argument must be reconsidered constantly: because you are always becoming ignorant of it. In order to carry it around in yourself, then, you must confront it somehow. You confront it through the Community, through hearing it within the Community. In this way, always be reoriented to this Obviousness. Not merely the obviousness that you do not know anything about what anything is, but that whatever is is not anything about which anything can be known. There is no such knowledge, you see? Thus, you have no recourse to anything like super-knowledge.

The Self, Brahman, is this Ignorance, not "something," not the idea of knowledge that you have in mind, not concepts like "the Self on the right." What does Ignorance have to do with being on the right?

STUDENT: Master, I don't know (laughing).

MASTER DA FREE JOHN: Nevertheless, it is true enough in the ordinary sense. There is only complete Ignorance, and yet you are here. Whatever the ultimate significance of "you" is, in philosophical terms, you are still completely Ignorant of it. Therefore, you can bypass all of the argument, all the consideration, all the philosophy, by Realizing that you are simply Ignorant of it. Asking "Who am I?" as Ramana Maharshi recommended to his devotees is not a matter of finding out who "I" am. It is a matter of Realizing that you are completely Ignorant of who "I" is. The "I" is not something about which there can be knowledge. The questions "Who am I? What is it?" cannot be known. Yet, that Ignorance is also Consciousness itself. This Ignorance, this Consciousness is your very Condition under all conditions. □