

## BOOK REVIEW

### **Easy Death**

by Da Free John – Dawn Horse Press, \$10.95  
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John White  
Cheshire, Connecticut

When a genius speaks, it behooves us to pay attention and consider his presentation. Da Free John is a religious genius – an enlightened spiritual master whose presence in the world is a rare opportunity for the rest of humanity to awaken to the Supreme Identity as he himself has. His decade of teaching has produced a prodigious amount of brilliant discourse on a variety of subjects. Altogether, they constitute the basis for human reformation and the emergence of a global culture based on love and wisdom, conducive to accelerating the evolutionary process that seeks to have us all ascend to godhood. Other books of Da Free John comment on meditation, religion, science, sexuality, diet, exercise, spiritual practice, and politics. *Easy Death* continues his examination of the fundamental aspects of existence and the enlightened stance one should have with regard to them.

There are five parts to this compilation of talks and essays: the truth about death, the transcendence of fear, beyond the traditional wisdom on death, transcending the cosmic mandala, and how to serve the dying. Space doesn't permit detailed coverage of the book, so I will summarize and quote in order to give the flavor of this tremendously important work, paying special attention to Da Free John's pronouncements about the near-death experience.

Kenneth Ring, founder and president of IANDS, has provided a most engaging foreword to *Easy Death*. He notes that Da Free John,

provides a full account of the interplay of neurological, psychological, and psychic factors that together will determine the form of the near-death experience. The framework he offers to us is again not to be found in either the popular or scientific literature in near-death studies. In all

these ways – and in others you will discover for yourself – Da Free John undermines the convenient understanding of this phenomenon and reveals its hidden and deeper meanings (p. xvii).

Death rightly understood, Da Free John says, is a process of transition and an opportunity for transformation-enlightenment by passing beyond all phenomena of nature and egoic-based attentional processes to the source of cosmos and consciousness alike, God or Transcendental Reality. However, we need not – should not – simply wait for death. The difference between ordinary individuals and enlightened beings is the sense of self or identity with which they live. Fear of death is, as Da Free John puts it, “fear of surrender to infinity” (p. 105). Our real identity, our true self is infinite and immortal – Eternal Life. This can be realized while alive; enlightenment is possible *now*. The ego – the contracted, separate self-sense – can be undone through spiritual practice. “It is only the transcendence of self-contraction, self-possession, fear and the egoic mind of fear that permits us to *participate* in existence *totally, freely*, and to the degree of *real Happiness*” (p. 125).

Fear of death is thus transcended so that “easy death” becomes the moment-to-moment surrender or sacrifice of separate selfhood into the Divine, even at the moment of biological demise:

We should fully consent to die at the moment of death, and so be released toward what is new and awaiting above and beyond the “realities” of the present body-mind. Our ability to do this will be either enhanced or limited to the same degree we are able to surrender in God while alive. Therefore, in order for death to be an ecstatic transition for us, we must not only study and prepare for the specific and terminal process of death itself, but we must also devote ourselves to an ecstatic or self-transcending way of life while alive (p. 46).

Or as Indic scholar Georg Feuerstein puts it succinctly in his long and excellent introduction to *Easy Death*: “Surrender is the only authentic response to death, just as it is the only true response to Life” (p. 4).

Short of that, Da Free John says, people create all sorts of consoling fantasies about death, including “life-after-life” phenomena. At this point in his teaching, readers of this journal and especially NDErs should prepare for a shock, because Da Free John declares,

. . . the experiences and visions [near-death experiencers] report should be recognized rightly as hallucinated phenomena that arise from stimulation of the higher centers of the brain during the withdrawal of energy and attention from the body at death. These experiences, like those of the conventional mystic, are, no matter how consoling or sublime, nonetheless founded in ego-consciousness (p. 50).

My first response to that statement was to recall all the instances of paranormal knowledge that NDErs have reported and had substantiated. It seemed Da Free John had overstepped himself, as he occasionally does, when he said “hallucinated phenomena.” I was therefore pleased to find his position qualified by acknowledging that there are indeed veridical phenomena such as out-of-body clairvoyance and that he does not deny the traditional cosmology of higher planes of existence populated by other beings. Rather, his point – with which I fully agree – is this: Just as our minds play tricks on us while living, so it is while dying. Anything less than enlightenment is to some degree illusion, misperception, clouded vision, fantasy, even hallucination. Near-death experiences, then, even though they occur genuinely in an after-death environment, are nevertheless productions of an ego-based state of consciousness. They are *not* ultimate reality. It is, Da Free John implies, inherently impossible for an enlightened person to have an NDE. Only the ego dies; only the ego “goes” anywhere after death; only the ego reincarnates. The enlightened person realizes that he or she is always already infinite, eternal, immortal, the Self of all.<sup>1</sup>

Now it is true that NDErs often report diminution of ego-sense and reorientation of their lives toward selfless, compassionate service as a result of their postmortem experience. Thus, Da Free John does not totally devalue or dismiss the NDE. He does, however, point out its tentative, relative nature and deglamorizes it. He says:

We have the opportunity in the subtler range of our existence [such as the NDE environment] to explore higher conditions of existence and the Transcendental or Ultimate Condition of all existence. That opportunity is directly available to our consciousness in the present moment, but we are dissociated from it through the habit mechanism of attention . . . . What people are seeing in the near-death state are mind forms or tendencies of mind. The tendencies of their attention are causing them to gravitate toward apparitions in the universal realm of appearances. Thus, people do not generally report a direct awareness of the mechanism on the basis of which phenomena are arising. Rather, they describe secondary visions (pp. 257-258).

A little later he says,

Most human deaths are associated with fear (or egoic non-participation) and are not consciously and meditatively engaged.<sup>2</sup> The result of any such death is generally the insertion of attention into the immediate inner or etheric side of the gross plane of Nature, where personal existence continues, temporarily, much as it did during physical embodiment, and physical reincarnation inevitably follows. There are also profoundly agonizing, terrible, and frightening possibilities in the after-death state, and these, like more pleasant transitions, are experienced because of the

latent tendencies of mechanical mind (developed and reinforced by un-Enlightened habit patterns while alive in gross form). In any case, even such hells and purgatories are only temporary, and they can be transcended (even when they appear) by a profound effort of self-surrender and love-communion with Higher Divine Power, conductivity and upward release of attention, and the direct exercise of real or radical attention (p. 284).

*Easy Death* contains profound wisdom. I recommend it to NDE researchers, IANDS members, and one other group: those who will someday die.

### NOTES

1. The editor of *Easy Death*, Georg Feuerstein, commented as follows in response to my review:

You state that Master Da implies that it is inherently impossible for an enlightened person to have an NDE. This is relatively true/false. In the Enlightened disposition any experience is possible, because even though the ego-identity has shifted to become (or rather has been supplanted by) the All-Identity, the experiential phenomena and states *continue* for the body-mind with which the Enlightened being is *apparently* associated. Thus, one must assume that NDEs are quite possible for the Enlightened being. In fact, Master Da has experienced such states, just as he experienced other altered states of consciousness. *But* he is not defined by those experiences. They pertain to the body-mind and its environments.

2. This would be true of the NDE almost absolutely. In his foreword, Ring notes that he found only a single instance among the hundreds of cases he investigated where the NDEr reported conscious surrender into the process of ego-death at the time of the NDE.