

From
The Book of Enlightened Masters:
Western Teachers in Eastern Traditions

By Andrew Rawlinson, p.333
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I know nothing about this man. Several years ago someone lent me his book, *Do You See What I See?* It contains no information about him except the following: that he is the founder of a community in Denver, Colorado, called 'The Aspen Grove' (since defunct, I've been told); and that the copyright for the book is in the name of Edwin Smith (which is presumably his original name; I have no idea why he chose the pseudonym, Jae Jah Noh). *Do You See What I See?* is a book of metaphysical passion—and there are not too many of them. The central thesis is that simply by being human we are in the perfect position to understand life and our place in it. There is nothing to be done in addition to being alive—that is, in addition to accepting life as it is without resisting or avoiding it. There is no preparation for life, no dress rehearsal. "If you are here, you are prepared." (61)

How can one really explain the Infinite? Only an infinite explanation could possibly achieve that purpose and it is immediately available in the form of real life. The infinite explanation arises spontaneously and naturally as the form of your very life. Life is itself its own explanation, and immediately obviates the need for any other. (p. 9)

Everybody's life, by definition, consists of things that enter and leave it. Jae Jah Noh explains this basic fact by reference to two states (which are ultimately one, I need hardly say): consciousness and awareness.

Consciousness is reality. Consciousness is That Which Is. It is God, Truth, the One. It is prior to all things. It *is* all things. It is the cosmic energy from which all things take form.

Awareness is the realm of the mind. Yet, awareness is a modification of consciousness, a limitation upon it. While consciousness is absolute, awareness is relative. One's awareness is always *of* consciousness.

The realm of the Absolute is not a separate realm or world. It is simply reality beyond its conditioned forms. It is Absolute Consciousness . . .

It is not possible, then, to 'expand' your consciousness. Consciousness is not *yours*. You *are* consciousness. It is not a mind-form, not something you possess, it is you, Self.

It is possible to 'expand' your awareness. It is possible to alter your awareness until awareness and consciousness are identical, at which time awareness is destroyed and consciousness abides. In a more accurate sense, though, nothing has really been expanded, nothing has changed. Awareness has simply been released from the separative activity of the mind. It has been allowed to be in its true form, which is without condition. Only the appearance of change is present due to one's tendency to identify with limited forms of what is . . .

From this perspective, something comes into existence only when it enters the field of awareness. Thus, the mind is the field of birth and death. It is the stage upon which That Which Is comes and goes in front of the pinhole perspective of the perceiver. (78, 79)

All of this is good stuff—one might even say, intoxicating stuff. And it is based on Jae Jah Noh's own experience. He starts his book with a description of what happened to him but I have left it to more or less the end because the truth stands by itself and not because it is backed up by anything. However, his experience is interesting. As a result of reading a book, he became enlightened. (He says anything can trigger it off.)

Suddenly, a connection was made, something happened, and immediately 'every thing' made 'sense' . . .

I do not think I can adequately convey the sensation of non-obstruction here. Before, the pursuit of knowledge and the understanding of the relationships between various 'facts' had always been accomplished with a great amount of effort. It was very much like walking through knee-deep mud. I could think and make various connections, but it was difficult. Yet, now, I was like a skater upon a surface of ice. There was a tremendous feeling of release from the effort I had known before. It was as though knowledge existed as a totality of open passages which had visited my mind. Now I could walk through these passages, make any sort of connection without thought or effort because I was being guided by knowledge itself . . . Everything related to everything else. It was truly all one . . .

This experience has slowly matured into a living reality, an on-going experience of the transcendental. I am never without it. I am never outside this living presence. (13-15)

But this living presence is always available-to everyone.

Your entire existence has been preparation for the moment you are now living. All that is necessary is for you to consciously surrender at this moment. You are always ready for life, Truth, God . . .

Since we are always ready for spiritual work, what prevents it is our belief that we are not ready, our belief that there is something still to achieve, our belief that we must attain some knowledge prior to beginning. Our belief that we are not ready is our rationale for searching, for avoiding the inevitable . . . You are ready when you are willing, not when some external condition is met. (61, 62)

In the end, we are always brought back Jae Jah Noh's essential message: we already, at any given moment, have everything we need. All that is required is that we accept it without reservation.

I do not know why The Aspen Grove ceased to function or what Jae Jah Noh is doing now. But I'd like to.