


TRANSMISSION OF THE FLAME

JEAN KLEIN

Edited by Emma Edwards

 Third Millennium Publications

Copyright © Jean Klein, 1990

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any means without permission in writing from the Publisher, Third Millennium Publications, P.O.Box 250, St. Peter Port, Guernsey, C.I.

Library of Congress Catalog Card No.: 90-83516
ISBN No.: 1-877769-22-3

Cover Photograph by John Chase Lewis
Design and typography by Janet Andrews, Desktop Studio
Printed in the United States of America
First Printing: October 1990
Second Printing: August 1993

Acknowledgments

We give heartfelt thanks to Janet Andrews and Mary Dresser for the many hours they spent helping to prepare the text for printing and for their willingness to handle the myriad details related to publishing the book. Their unconditional support has been invaluable. Many thanks also to all those who transcribed the tapes that are the basis for this book, especially Pamela Lightbody and Don Wetherly in England, whose clear transcriptions made the going much easier. And, finally, deepest gratitude to Dennis Lewis and Warren Perrine for their generous donations, which made the publication of this book possible.

Preface

People often ask, "What are the talks like in Holland? Are the questions the same in France as in Italy? How do the dialogues in America differ from those in England? Are there differences in the types of questions asked in the different countries?" Here, then, is a book of dialogues recorded during seminars in four of the countries Jean Klein visits. As they all appear within a span of eleven months, one can see certain themes in the teaching carried through and approached a little differently each time.

Although the talks have been considerably edited to make the spoken word intelligible and consistent for the reader, they have been left as much as possible in their "natural state." You may thus see for yourselves the differences in the formulation of the questions. You may also see the similarities, and be reminded that all these questions go around the real question, the question we cannot formulate, which asks for the most profound intimacy with ourselves—the living question.

Emma Edwards

OTHER WORKS BY JEAN KLEIN

In English:

I Am
Be Who You Are
The Ease of Being
Who Am I?
Open to the Unknown

In French:

L'ultime Réalité
Sois ce que tu es
La Joie sans Objet
L'insondable Silence

In German:

Friede im Sein

In Dutch:

Gesprekken met Jean Klein

In Spanish:

La Escucha Creativa
La Mirada Inocente
La Sencillez del ser
La Alegria Sin Objeto
Quien Soy Yo

Translations also available in Italian, Greek and Hebrew

Journals edited by Jean Klein:

Listening
Etre (France)
Essere (Italy)
Ser (Spain)

Videotapes:

The Current of Love (with Liliás Folan)
The Flame of Being (with Michael Toms)
Love and Marriage (with Paul & Evelyn Moschetta)

Table of Contents

Prologue i

Dialogues

Baak, Holland 1

San Rafael, California 67

London, England 157

Provence, France 217

PROLOGUE

I WOULD LIKE TO TALK ABOUT THE EVENTS *which led up to the awakening in your true nature. To begin at the beginning of this historical journey, would you mind talking a little about your childhood? Was it happy? Were you always serious, even as a little boy, or did you have the feelings, actions and reactions of other little boys?*

I had a very happy childhood. When I was very young, I lived in Brno, in what was then Bohemia. Then my father was transferred to Prague and later Vienna.

Did you live in the city or the country?

The city, but we went to the country often. My grandfather had a farm in Bohemia and I went there every summer and loved riding the horses.

What was the atmosphere in your home like? Were your parents religious or spiritual people?

It was a very harmonious house. My parents loved music, paintings and sculpture. My paternal grandfather played the viola very well. No, they were not especially religious people, but they lived very much in aesthetic appreciation.

What about your early education, did you go to the local school?

Yes, but I was more serious than my playmates and enjoyed being on my own a lot. I didn't like competitive sports, for example, and tried by every method to avoid them! My close friends were always much older than I.

When did you begin the violin?

At around seven years. There was always music in our lives and I loved music from infancy. My maternal uncle was a very good amateur guitarist and when I was six he bought me a guitar and gave me lessons for nine months. I enjoyed it very much and practiced a lot. But at that time there was not so much music for the guitar and so my father gave me a violin. I took to it at once and was earnest in my practice. I have continued to play all my life.

Around the age of fourteen or fifteen I began, like many teenagers, to feel a strong urge for freedom. It was a desire to be free from all restraints, all conditions. I lived in constant crisis.

Crisis is a strong word. What do you mean?

Crisis may be too strong a term. I do not mean a psychological, depressive crisis—but a crisis in the sense of always being open to change, to the new, to being surprised. I lived in constant questioning; I began to inquire into many things, always with the inner need to understand how I functioned. I first began reading mystical writings in the Judeo-Christian traditions. Then my explorations turned more towards society. At this time I was very influenced by the ideas of Gandhi on non-violence, and also by the anarchism and ideas on autonomy of Max Stirner and John Henry Mackay. One could say it was a period of anarchism on every level, but always creative, never destructive. First I was interested in how I

lived with myself and then how I lived in society. I read Nietzsche, Dostoyevsky, anyone who questioned conformity, and I loved Rilke.

And didn't Gandhi's ahimsa ideas influence you to become vegetarian around this time?

Yes, at sixteen, much to my mother's consternation!

Were there moments as a child when you became self-aware, aware of how you functioned? Because very often childhood passes in a kind of nebulous sleeping state and we wake up to being a young adult.

There were many moments of awareness, but my first real insight (*prise de conscience*) was at about nine or ten years old. I was practicing the violin and the dog was whining, interrupting my practice. I picked up something and began to spank it and suddenly, with my arm raised, I saw the eyes of the dog and realized what I was doing. This was the first time I was aware, in a bipolar way, of my reaction, and of the impact of my reaction. I realized that the reaction was based on a sense of superiority which didn't exist. The impact was very strong. Never again did I fall into *that* trap.

The first glimpse of oneness or self-awareness was at about seventeen. I was waiting one warm afternoon for a train. The platform was deserted and the landscape sleepy. It was silent. The train was late, and I waited without waiting, very relaxed and free from all thinking. Suddenly a cock crowed and the unusual sound made me aware of my silence. It was not the objective silence I was aware of, as often happens when one is in a quiet place and a sudden sound throws into relief the silence around. No, I was ejected into my own silence. I felt myself in awareness beyond the sound or the silence. Subsequently, this feeling visited me several times.

When did you begin to be interested specifically in Eastern philosophy?

My interest in oriental philosophy had been originally sparked by Gandhi. But, at this period, many people were interested also in

Lao Tze, Chuang Tzu, Tagore. Eastern philosophy was in the air. I had friends who were in the Theosophical Society and we discussed metaphysical questions. I always found the Society too sentimental, lacking precision in its thinking, but we had some lively discussions. Then a copy of *The Symbolism of the Cross* by René Guénon fell into my hands and it was a turning point for me.

In which way?

Up until then I had been influenced mostly by non-structural ideas, as I said. I was profoundly anarchistic. But Guénon presented a structure which appealed to me immensely because it was a metaphysical structure, not a political or social structure. It was, for me, an introduction to cosmology. He spoke about becoming an integrated being and referred to Tradition.

As opposed to traditional?

Yes. For Guénon, Tradition is the principle transmitted from master to disciple through initiation. This awoke in me the feeling that it was actually humanly possible to become integrated in the whole.

Did anyone else influence you at this time?

I read Coomaraswamy, especially his arguments with Guénon's view of Buddhism, which caused Guénon to modify his position. I read Aurobindo and in 1929 I heard about Krishnamurti and how he left the Theosophical Society.

Were you touched by his leaving the Theosophical Society?

I was interested in his motive for leaving, I sympathized with him. There was never a time when I wanted to adopt a philosophy or system of ideas, beliefs. I read in order to understand myself more deeply. I had always been interested in function, in the relation between biology and psychology.

Yes, it seems that you were, from an early age, interested in how you, the human being, functioned—the relationship between biology and psychology. Was it this that led you to the study of medicine?

Yes, my love was music and I studied medicine to make my father happy! But it worked out well because my studies combined the two, biology and psychology, the relation between thought, feeling and muscle action. My life was very intense before the war but my inquiry, though sincere, was still around the personality. It was not until my mid-thirties that I became oriented, free from all that former dispersion!

When you were in India?

Even before I went.

And where were you during the Second World War?

In Algeria and France.

During the war years, did your inquiry continue?

Yes. But of course it was difficult in Algeria, and relations with people in France were not easy, because of my activities at the time. But I never stopped self-exploration.

What were those activities?

Let us simply say that they belonged to the right acting of people fleeing oppression.

Did you continue your music?

Yes, in my free time I played three or four chamber concerts a year. And I organized a children's choir in which my two young daughters sang. I also gave music lessons.

And did you meet anyone interesting in the spiritual field at this time?

I met an Englishman who was a disciple of Sai Baba [Sai Baba from Bombay] and he talked to me about the different techniques of transformation practiced in India.

What led you to India after the war? Was it to be in a society where there was Tradition, transmission of the truth?

Yes. For me India was a country which integrated the social and spiritual in daily life. My going was not to find fulfillment in India especially, but to be in an environment that welcomed inquiring. I realized that I would not find what I was looking for in pursuing learning and experiences. I was also completely fed up with the materialism in Europe which was particularly strong after the war. I could perhaps have gone to another country where there was a traditional way of living, but India attracted me. My reading of René Guénon was certainly behind this.

What was your state of mind in this pre-India period? Was this the time when you became oriented, when your inquiry became more focused?

Yes, because I had not found freedom and peace in objects and situations I came to a stop of accumulating knowledge and experience and was brought to a very deep inquiry: How can I find fulfillment, if not in objects? I lived for a long time with this question, in not-knowing.

There was a giving-up of everything which was not essential, which did not refer to inner beauty, inner freedom. I felt enormous energy and intelligence in this period. This brought a joy in living, an enthusiasm for life and great earnestness in the inquiry. It awoke in me the desire to become established in this not-knowing, to find some assistance in the inquiry.

So would you say that the difference between the intelligence before and after this period of intense inquiry was that whereas before, intelligence was related to knowing, later it was related to not-knowing?

Yes, exactly. I had always been a serious inquirer, but now I was a disciple of life, of truth. It was a time of many insights and the

spontaneous transposition of these onto all levels of existence. It kept the flame alight.

You said you wanted assistance in the inquiry. What was the motive for this desire to find a guide?

There was still a lack of total fulfillment and I felt my search was still conditioned by the belief in a seeker. I knew consciousness related to objects but not consciousness free from objects. I had no image of what form the assistance would take, man or woman, dream or bird. I was simply open to life, waiting without undertaking anything, for what life would present. And then I felt a certain call to go to India.

So when you went to India you were not conditioned by the idea of gurus and disciples?

Not at all! Not at all!

Did you know anyone in India?

I took a certain number of introductions to people with me.

Gurus or intellectuals?

No, not gurus. Artists, teachers, intellectuals, people generally interested in all the aspects of life. I also had an introduction from Mrs. Lansberry, who was the head of the Buddhist Society in Paris, to a Theravadin *bhikku* in Ceylon and he was the first person I contacted.

How long were you in Ceylon?

Well, before we went to India, the boat stopped in Colombo. I loved Ceylon at once. There was no violence anywhere. You could touch the silence. I found it so beautiful, the temples and the great golden reclining Buddha! And as I had this introduction to the Venerable Rahula, the head of a Theravadin *sangha* (order), during my two weeks in Ceylon we met often and talked. He impressed me quite well and when, a few months later, I was installed in Bangalore (I