

THE BOOK  
OF LISTENING

OTHER WORKS BY JEAN KLEIN

Be Who You Are

Who Am I?

Beyond Knowledge

Living Truth

I Am

Open to the Unknown

Transmission of the Flame

The Ease Of Being

*In Spanish*

Quien Soy Yo?

Translations also available in French, Italian, German  
and Chinese

The Book of  
**LISTENING**



Jean Klein

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## Introduction

This book is a compilation of Volumes 1 – 10 of Jean Klein’s journal *Listening*, published on a limited basis between 1989-1995. The articles whose sources are not otherwise identified, are based on private conversations with Jean Klein usually around a single topic. I made notes as we talked, occasionally recording the conversations, and sometimes, as in the prose poem *On Love*, the “echo” of a conversation was later distilled into a few lines.

Each original volume was loosely arranged around a theme and included an original private discussion or a transcription of a public talk with Jean Klein, various favourite articles, one question answered in depth (*Your Question*) and a brief description from different angles of Jean’s unique approach to the role of the body in his teaching.

Most of Jean Klein’s teaching was simply through his presence and through question and answer dialogues where he “answered the questioner, not the question”. Jean emphasised the direct approach to liberation, an approach free from emphasis on the attainment of progressively subtle psycho-somatic states. However, in this book there are ten short chapters dealing with Jean Klein’s approach to the body. These will be clear to readers of the original journals who may have attended seminars, but a word of explanation is perhaps needed for the majority of readers.

In conjunction with dialogues Jean offered a unique form of what he called body-work or yoga. This was not taught as a requirement for understanding or realisation, but as a useful tool for getting to know one’s conditioning. Our thought processes affect the body and mind and vice versa. The body-work was introduced to help clarify this relationship and bring an awareness that our real nature is neither the body nor the

mind. The aim of this “yoga” was to bring about sensations of relaxation, expansion, light, space and energy which, when noted and welcomed, can deepen understanding of our real nature. This understanding in turn brings about a letting-go in our psycho-somatic structures. Insight and relaxation or letting go can bring about apperception as a total body-mind experience. While the understanding of our real nature is not dependent on anything, for many people Jean’s philosophy came to life and light when experienced in this approach to the body.

The blend of mind and body had interested Jean since his early medical and musical studies. He was also an accomplished violinist and as a young adult was a voice coach and choral director. He combined a knowledge of music with his knowledge of the effects of muscle and mental tension on performance. Later he developed this psycho-somatic relationship when he added a Kashmiri style subtle energy yoga to his studies of traditional yoga learned in India with Krishnamacharya.

Jean experienced life free from memory, with an openness and freshness as if every event were new. He greeted old friends as if for the first time and welcomed those he had just met as if they were old friends. He took nothing and no one for granted. He might stop abruptly, taken by the shape of clouds or the play of light or the eyes of a baby or animal. What struck those in his company was how free from preconceptions he was and how he experienced everything as if for the first time and with a sense of exploration like a young child. He had a boundless energy for living and seeing things in a new way and it made his companionship a real joy, no matter the activity. Spending time with him always had the quality of a new experience.

This was all the more impressive considering Jean Klein’s complex and often difficult life and his considerable intellect and many talents. He was widely educated and widely travelled and spoke four languages (Czech and German in his youth and French and English in adult life). After his return from a long sojourn in India he was invited to hold meetings in many countries including England, France, Germany, Greece, Israel,

Holland, Spain, Switzerland, Tunisia, and the United States. He was not a simple sadhu by any means and yet his presence conveyed utter simplicity.

Jean Klein had a great appreciation and knowledge of the Arts—painting, sculpture and poetry in particular. He enjoyed all expressions of beauty, both man-made and natural. Most of all he loved humankind and his adult life was devoted to helping in any way that he was asked and able.

I hope this compilation captures a little of the multi-cultural interests and tastes of this truly remarkable Renaissance man.

E.E.



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# LISTENING

Volume 1

1989

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## The Disciple and the Guru

**Jean Klein:** Ultimately speaking there is not a guru and not a disciple, no teacher or teaching, because what you are is not teachable. Have you anything to say?

Q. So in what sense can we understand the word “disciple”?

JK. To be a disciple means to prepare oneself to face the truth. It is a profound need to be one with truth. The preparation is the result of seeing that one’s life is dispersed, that it is still meaningless, that one is lost in trying to escape from a meaningless life. When the question, “What is the meaning of life?” appears in all urgency, when one is ready to give all to this question, then one is a disciple, a disciple of truth, of life.

Q. So there is a clear moment when one is not a disciple and when one is?

JK. Absolutely. When you are a disciple of life all doings refer to the question, to truth. Life may not change outwardly, but there is a feeling of inner orientation, a conviction of the quest.

Q. How can actions refer to the truth when one is not yet established in truth?

JK. The threshold of truth is the absence of calculation, the not-knowing state. All that appears in you refers to this thoughtless ground, your silence. Every object appears and dies in this stillness.

Q. What are the signs for oneself that one is oriented, on the right scent?

JK. You have the inner conviction, from an insight, of the truth. You are free from day-dreaming, free from intention. You are free from compensations. You feel many moments without lack. You are more free from yourself!

Q. Is it necessary, when one is oriented, to have a teacher?

JK. You may need it because you are not yet established. The real disciple who refers all appearances to his openness, to his not-knowing, does not look for anything objective. He knows that truth cannot be found in an object. He lives only in openness, this waiting without waiting for anything. In this not-knowing, the desire may come up to meet one who is established in the openness. But a disciple will never go to see someone from curiosity or to look for a teacher, because he already knows that anything he finds is not the guru.

Q. So one lives in openness and in this openness the guru finds one?

JK. Yes, that is certain. It is only alert waiting without waiting for anything that brings you to the openness. The guru is the openness. So whoever goes looking for a guru can never find him because he is not objective and cannot be sought. As long as you look you are not open and unless you are completely open he cannot find you.



Q. So the guru is awake in the disciple before the disciple is found by the guru-as-human-being?

JK. Yes, only then can the guru in you find itself. The ego can only see an object, never the guru. It is only when you have the fore-feeling of truth, when you are a disciple of truth, that the guru can meet you.

Q. What then would you say is the role of this "human guru"?

JK. To help the passage of the self, which is looking for itself, to find itself. Only one who is established in openness can help with this passage because otherwise the personality blocks the passage. The guru is free from identification with what he is not. This presence in freedom stimulates the presence in the disciple.

Q. And this is the transmission?

JK. Yes, but you see there is nothing to transmit. Only to awaken what is already there.

Q. Because there is so much confusion over the transmission of this and that, energy, powers, states and so on.

JK. But all these belong to the phenomenal world. They have nothing to do with your real nature which is not phenomenal. They are experiences which, in the minds of the ignorant, are confused with the experience without an experiencer, the non-experience.

Q. Does one always know immediately when one has been found by the right teacher?

JK. The presence of the guru is instantaneous but if you are not ripe it may take time to penetrate.

Q. And by “ripe” you mean completely open, in innocence of all ideas, preconception, book-knowledge? Is it the same as when you are open to being surprised?

JK. Yes. When you find yourself in a state without reference you are open to the absence of yourself, the unexpected.

Q. So a real disciple already has a fore-feeling of the answer, he feels his autonomy and this autonomy is in a way confirmed by the presence of the teacher?

JK. Yes. When you feel more and more free from being something, free from need; when you feel at home in your total absence; when you are free from the teacher, you have found the right teacher.

Q. So if I have more than one teacher or I look for another teacher after my “guru” dies, I have not yet met the guru?

JK. No. There is only one guru. When you meet the guru it is forever. It is beyond your life, beyond your phenomenal appearance.

Until one has caught the scent all looking is in ignorance. People who go guru-shopping, looking for bargains, fall into the hands of merchants, so-called teachers who want students at any price, who need students for psychological survival. Guru-shopping is a lack of maturity, a lack of inquiry. The emphasis is on the person. Such people are not disciples. They are fundamentally lazy. A real disciple is never lazy.

In a mature student the quest is one-pointed, not dispersed. He or she gives all their love to the quest. A disciple already feels that the answer is only to be found in silent living with the question. There is no eccentric energy to go looking “outside.”

Q. And by “silent living” you mean ...?

JK. Not to touch the quest, not to manipulate it with book-knowledge, comparison, interpretation, reference to the already known. As you said, to live in complete innocence with the quest.

Q. Can you talk a little more about those who are not yet oriented, who have not the fore-feeling of their real nature? What can they gain from being in the presence of one who is established in openness?

JK. When you look at the teacher as a person, as something objective, then you can never find yourself in this looking. You will find only the person over and over again and this will leave you dissatisfied, it keeps you in conflict. But a guru gives no hold to this projection and there may come a day when you feel the non-objective in yourself.

Everything must be submitted to what is non-objective. Surrender all that you are not. But before you can surrender this that you are not, you must know what it is that you are not. This calls for unbounded exploration. In knowing what you are not there is presence. Give all your love to this presence and you will discover it is not an object. Surrender is not a thought. You can only surrender to surrender itself.

Q. Are there any obstacles in that realm before one has a fore-feeling of truth?

JK. There may be the tendency to stay in old patterns, in ignorance hidden by a new vocabulary. Then there may come a lack of exploring where a lazy mind has taken over. This I call being in the garage.

Q. What about those who learn to articulate the words of the teaching and who may have had certain experiences? Often they think themselves ready to teach. Is this the case or are they in the garage?

JK. They are in the garage and look for compensation in teaching. The blind leading the blind. Real knowing comes from not knowing.

Q. Sometimes one feels a certain understanding and one has no more vital questions ...

JK. But one must have a question. When you don't have any more questions it is because you are lazy, tamasic, or the ego is in the way, wanting to be something or appear as something. When you are earnest in the quest you live in alertness and humility.

Q. What keeps the exploration aflame?

JK. Only listening, attention free from qualification and anticipation will keep you from falling into the old trap of projecting desires for this and that. Otherwise one lives in self-deception.

Q. Is it not normal to want to be in the company of the guru if he mirrors one's self? The lover with the beloved?

JK. When you have the right feeling of what you are, you are always with the guru. When you really feel what you are, there is not separation. It does not belong to space and time. You are still identified with an object. In your profound absence of ego, there is no need to be with or without. You are free from all objects.

Q. So if one feels the need for something when the guru "is away" or one feels lack ...

JK. Then you are not a disciple. You are still attached to the body-mind, to an object. As long as you take yourself to be a disciple you are not a disciple. When you take yourself for a disciple you will take the guru as a teacher and emphasize his person.

You must never look for a teacher as something perceived. To be the knowing is a fundamental, original feeling in yourself. So when you think of the guru, the thought is only a pointer to this original feeling which you have in common, where there are not two. There must be no fixation on the teacher. In other words, let his total absence remind you of what you are fundamentally. As I said, surrender all to the non-objective, the silence.

Q. What would you say to one who has a feeling for what you are talking about but has not yet consciously experienced it?

JK. He or she is potentially a disciple, and I would say the only thing to do is to live with all your attention, all your heart, give all your love to the sayings of the guru. It is only in living in deep intimacy with the sayings that there is an answer. Don't look for anything else. Everything else is rubbish. See how you jump constantly from one thing to another. When there is understanding, there is no more jumping. Then when there is an insight, when there is a moment of living understanding, transpose it into your daily life.

Q. And is this transposition a voluntary act?

JK. When you have understood something deeply the transposition is spontaneous to all areas of your life. It is only this transposition that assures you you have really understood. Otherwise the understanding remains abstract.

It is not a transposition of the words, nor looking for the equivalent in one's experience. The words are not the meaning. It is not a transposition in thinking but in action, in daily happenings.

Q. Surely a moment of fundamental insight or understanding strikes every corner of one's existence so that transposition is simply recognizing that the insight is on every level.

JK. Yes, that is precisely what it means. It is seeing all physical and psychological levels, all occurrences, from the ultimate view.

But first live with the sayings!

Q. As everything a guru says can be meditated upon, can you give us a few sayings which you regard as essential to live with?

JK. Certainly. I would say:

What you are looking for is already there, before all physical appearance. It is. So all looking can only lead to an object.

Don't try to find a cause for happiness or moments of fulfillment. There is no cause. As long as you look for, and give, a cause, you turn your back on the fullness, the message of the moment.

Come to understand clearly that there is no seen without seeing, no heard without hearing. Bring the seen back to the seeing, the heard back to the hearing.

You are the openness and it is only in waiting without waiting that you become open to the openness. In the end openness is what it is open to, waiting is what it is waiting for. This is all.

Live with these sayings. Let them become living understanding. This means, be aware how they act in you, how their perfume invades your body and your mind. Become one with this perfume. You can never remember this essence which is behind the words, you can only remember the sayings. But when you have once been attuned to the essence of the words they are no longer simply sayings but pregnant with their source. Then when you allow the words to be the Word, they have the power to transform. Live in identity with the silence in the sayings.

## Gitanjali

Rabindranath Tagore

*I had gone a-begging from door to door in the village path, when thy golden chariot appeared in the distance like a gorgeous dream and I wondered who was this king of all kings!*

*My hopes rose high and methought my evil days were at an end, and I stood waiting for alms to be given unasked and for wealth scattered on all sides in the dust.*

*The chariot stopped where I stood. Thy glance fell on me and thou camest down with a smile. I felt that the luck of my life had come at last. Then of a sudden thou didst hold thy right hand and say "What hast thou to give to me?"*

*Ah, what a kingly jest it was to open thy palm to a beggar to beg! I was confused and stood undecided, and then from my wallet I slowly took out the least little grain of corn and gave it to thee.*

*But how great was my surprise when at the day's end I emptied the bag on the floor to find the least little grain of gold among the poor heap. I bitterly wept and wished that I had had the heart to give thee my all.*

## Your Question

Q. I feel concerned with knowing my real nature but this concern does not seem to be deep or earnest enough to actually bring any real insights. How can I become more serious, more effective, in my inquiry?

**Jean Klein:** Being more concerned will not make you more concerned. To deepen your inquiry you must explore, adventure into uncharted territories. When you read books and live in compensation, escaping from your deepest desires and needs, you will become bored because you refer everything to the past, to what you already know.

Earnestness comes when you look closely at your body-mind. Inquire and question your motives for your actions. Ask yourself, "What am I really looking for in this act?" I don't mean go into an analysis of it, looking for compensatory motives. But discover the *ultimate motive* for what you do. You will see that the ultimate desire is to be desireless, the ultimate goal of all achieving is to be free from the need for striving, the ultimate motive for all becoming is to be free from all that you are not. So face the moment itself.

Explore how you waste energy in nervous and muscle compensations. See how you spend time in talking rubbish. Take note that perhaps the effort spent in working means more to you than the cheque at the end! Look how you function.

When you see your mechanism there will be discrimination in your life. You'll be less dispersed, an intelligence will come in. You will enjoy the quiet moment and look less for compensations.

It is only laziness which hinders a serious inquiry. Do not escape the ultimate moment. Face it and you will become concerned and earnest.