

# Jean Klein: The Dark Night of the Soul (1992)

[Interlocutor]: When we speak of Christian mysticism and what they call the "dark night of the soul," what can we say? It is a very frequent theme where confidence seems to prevail. Is it about individual consciousness? Personal consciousness?

[Jean Klein]: Yes, it is so, as for example in Saint John of the Cross. In mysticism, when one is engaged in the progressive path, there is the idea that something has to change, to transform, to attain. That is to say, everything happens only on a phenomenal plane. All of this takes place within an emotional relationship, of a subject facing an object.

At a given moment, the work of purification—that which had to be done—reaches a point where there is no longer anything to purify. One then finds oneself before an absence of object, like a white canvas. This absence of object is what is often described as the "dark night."

If one remains constantly in a subject-object relationship, but without an apparent object, a dramatic moment arises. Many Christian mystics engaged in this progressive path go through these dramatic moments. They feel they are close to something, but very rarely emerge from there into the direct path, toward our deep being, because they completely ignore the direct approach. They believe that such a thing could not present itself. Nevertheless, in the direct path there is something in us that has no object, which is not objective. It is precisely this which allows us to free ourselves from the subject-object relationship.

[Interlocutor]: That subject-object relationship in the progressive path would seem to be a great drama then.

[Jean Klein]: It is so because it is assumed that there are two: the "I" (the subject) and the object. If life is still considered as an object, if there is still "someone" who sees life, a very strong object relationship persists. One remains stranded in the seen. Then, the seen would have to be totally reabsorbed into the seer.

[Interlocutor]: That resorption of the seen into the seer seems extremely difficult.

[Jean Klein]: It is difficult because we are very accustomed to always living in a subject-object relationship. To truly know what we are, this subject and this object must reabsorb totally.

[Interlocutor]: In reality, the only thing that exists is vision. The seer and the seen thing do not exist by themselves, they are illusory. Everything reabsorbs into vision.

[Jean Klein]: Exactly, everything that exists is vision. Any object, whatever its form, appears in a determined space-time. The object is there as long as you are thinking it. Stop thinking it, and the object will cease to be.

Many people live in certain "states" that they maintain or feed, but they are still states experienced under the limitation of objects. That is what creates the dramatic moment of the "dark night." The object has no existence by itself; it always depends on consciousness. It is always a recognition. It is like the face you had before being born. It is that "I" we talk about, where there are no stages or degrees.

[Interlocutor]: The mother of all doubts... the recognition of which you speak is instantaneous.

[Jean Klein]: Yes, something happens that you cannot fabricate or provoke.

[Interlocutor]: That is what marks the limit of the progressive paths. It even seems that the subject-object relationship is sometimes accentuated compared to common life. There is no recognition by stages.

[Jean Klein]: At the moment when you abandon everything that is objective, the awakening to your total presence occurs. Your subjectivity, your presence, wants to become fully present. Thinking of death, of birth... that doesn't even return anymore.

[Interlocutor]: But I cannot represent this abandonment of objects to myself in any other way than progressively.

[Jean Klein]: Objects abandon themselves because they have no existence of their own. Outside of your vision, the object doesn't exist. Scientists affirm that the object independently exists to be visible, but when you reach a maturity—fruit of observation and intuition—you see perfectly that the seen demands a seer to be explicit. By understanding that objects have no reality in themselves, automatically the object brings you back to yourself.

Even when you are already established in that presence, the problem of birth and death ceases to be relevant; it is that we are in a "non-state." It is time to leave the

ghosts behind, those extraordinary states. There are beings who describe formidable, attractive, and interesting visions, but they are still states. At a given moment, total vision comes to dissolve all that. You see a situation totally, as a fait accompli. There, action flows by itself, an action of justice that springs from your observation.

If you act from your totality, from silence, the action is just. But in large part, our actions are ego reactions. When action springs from your reaction, even if you want to progress, there is no one there to do it. Progress is only a tool, an instrument to express yourself, an extension of yourself. For that instrument to be a prolongation par excellence, a certain adaptation is necessary. There we can indeed talk about progress, as when one learns to play the piano better or to recite poems. There, there is indeed technical progression.

But when it's about finding our true nature, there is no progression. Who do you want to progress? That is what you seek, isn't it? To live! A technique is needed for the world, of course, there are correct ways to learn things. But the rest is false. When you deeply observe your constant motives in life, what are you really seeking at heart? You seek to return home.

[Interlocutor]: Sometimes it happens that observation itself is a generator of tension. One clearly sees supplementary tensions due to that observation.

[Jean Klein]: That means you are not free from knowledge, that you are not free from the past. There is no observation with all its freshness and innocence. When you start to conceptualize observation, insecurity and tension arise. But in a pure observation, free of cause and purpose, there are no judgments. Sometimes we live it on a Sunday morning in the forest: you go for a walk, not as a tourist, but in pure perception. Pure perception toward God, we could say, if you don't interpret it.

[Interlocutor]: And if it is observation itself that hinders observation? I take your example of the forest: one can observe tensions in oneself, but if one simply "is" without wanting to observe in a voluntary way, is there observation anyway?

[Jean Klein]: In that case, you are not "in" observation as if it were a task. It is really a spontaneous function of our brain. You don't need to say "I am observing." It is something essential that happens when we realize that we don't know. During the day, we are almost all the time "practicing" the dark; real observation is only a small percentage. In other words: all objects are discovered, revealed totally for what they are when we see that they have no reality in themselves. A perceptive observation is needed, without intention. Because intention is but a tension. In a pure attention, without desire, the object is forced to truly reveal itself. It is something sacred. When you are truly in that reciprocity, somehow the lines are

blurred.

[Interlocutor]: And the love one has for an object?

[Jean Klein]: That is a concept. You are a concept. God is a concept. As long as there is adoration or admiration, a "knower" persists who admires. The admirer must merge completely into the admired; otherwise, duality will always remain: "I" and "God." You can adore God in the flowers, in the trees, in everything... that is poetry to speak of the divine. But as Master Eckhart said: "You must cease to be you so that He can find His place in you." The person who abandons their personality finds that the divine is there, and no longer as an object.

(Laughing)

[Interlocutor]: I believe many seekers abandon their personality only to assume another. They change names so there is a marked change.

[Jean Klein]: I question that. Maturation occurs when you inquire deeply, not to follow a goal or an end, because an end remains an object. We seek to obtain that object through experience, to arrive at a state of happiness. But in that ultimate satisfaction, in that "euthymia," the object you thought was the cause is not present. There is only fullness without cause. It is very important to understand that what we seek we cannot find, because we already are it. It is an opening.

No, we are not an object. At that moment, all your attention becomes immense, an immensity without borders. The brain stops functioning in a conditioned way and a total restructuring toward receptivity occurs.

When you pour all your energy, imagination, and capacity for investigation to realize a desire, along the path the object ends up being abandoned. It no longer matters if it's the "red car." What you desire deeply is to be without desires. There there is true tranquility, true happiness. Object satisfactions last for a time and then another desire arises. But if you deeply understand that the "without-desire" moment is totally without object and without cause, in that moment you open yourself to that deep presence in you. That would stop you from always seeking through objects. It is the fulfillment of desire.

Our true nature is open. You should open yourself to that openness. We are not made of objects. At that moment, all your attention becomes immense, as if it came from the sky. You feel it even physically as an expansion, an immensity without borders. The brain stops functioning in a limited way and a dismantling of your habitual structure occurs to give way to receptivity.

In short, please, look for the tactile sensation and not the conceptual affirmation. It is something very subtle, like a crack ready to receive. Understand that there is no cause, that there is no one behind this inspection; it is the immense freedom that allows us to realize. As long as you believe that it's you who seeks, you will be locked on the mental plane, locked "inside the skull." But at a given moment, the keys appear: what you seek is in you. It's without cause! In your very center, in that deep peace. The mental then abandons itself, recognizes its limits and realizes that there is no separate space in the world. Your happiness is that unity.

[Interlocutor]: What remains when admiration fades?

[Jean Klein]: I adore what there is to admire here. Admiration comes directly from that which you admire. If you have that conviction and pour all your intelligence and love toward pure admiration, in that moment there is no longer admiration, nor admired object, nor admirer. There is only presence and happiness without contours.

[Interlocutor]: But there exists the tendency to dualize even in that field.

[Jean Klein]: The admirer must merge completely into the admired. Otherwise, duality will always remain: "I" and "God." The admirer must disappear totally. Not by resisting admiration, but by following it to the end. Sometimes there are people who stay in admiration as something egoic, but true adoration must merge into the adored.

Very often what we call "sacred fear" appears. That responsibility of expressing something sacred, of articulating it with total perfection. At that moment, fear is there. But as soon as fear locks you in, it paralyzes you. There are actors who play based on the audience or the critics, what people think of them... but if one is established in their true nature, in the absence of "I", there is tranquility. Tranquility is the background of space. Objects appear on that prior tranquility.

[Interlocutor]: It is like an act of love without fear.

[Jean Klein]: Exactly. There is a deep respect for the work, for the sacred. The need to deliver the content in all its subtlety, depth, and life, with total understanding. That is not fear, it is an extreme attention. There is respect before the work and respect before the one who listens.

[Interlocutor]: It's a pity that fear is organic and doesn't disappear instantly.

[Jean Klein]: Observe fear, observe how it functions, and let it express itself. Psychological fear is not going to disappear immediately; it can even increase

during the period of observation, because there is no corrective intervention. But when fear is seen from our totality, there is no more paralysis. Seeing how you function is already the first step for total welcoming.

Well, in short. Let's have a little cigarette (laughs). The observation of fear should not be another object observed by a subject. It is what we call "residue" of what we really are. Like a barometer that you submerge in cold water: it marks the reality of the rise in temperature or pressure, or the increase of fear.