

## OTHER WORKS BY JEAN KLEIN

Be Who You Are

Who Am I?

Beyond Knowledge

Living Truth

Open to the Unknown

Transmission of the Flame

The Ease Of Being

Translations also available in French, Spanish, Italian,  
German and Chinese

# I AM

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## PREFACE

Some of you who read this book may have a kind of déjà-vu in places. This is because an earlier work *Neither This Nor That I Am* (Watkins 1981) has been completely revised and woven into these pages. I felt the earlier work needed re-writing; this book *I Am* is a clearer pointer to truth.

J.K

## FOR THE READER

I am a mother. I am a son. I am a doctor. I am a lawyer. I'm musical. I'm tall. I'm short. I'm American. I am French. I am Jewish. I am Christian. I am black. I'm gay. I am celibate. I'm depressed. I'm happy. I'm married. I am this. I am that.

We know ourselves only in relation to something. We only know a qualified "I." When we say "I am" the mind demands "What am I? I am what?" This book is about the "I am" prior to all qualification, what we are before the intrusion of the mind.

How can we know what cannot be qualified? It calls for a new kind of knowing, not a knowledge which comes from the accumulation of facts and experience. We may have absorbed every book published and experienced every adventure and it would not bring us one breath nearer to knowing "I am." So this new knowing begins by giving up looking for it in experiences and secondhand information. Giving up does not mean we become passive; on the contrary, in letting go of our mechanical learned responses we are open to our full potential, our creativity, a dynamic new realm. The natural state of the relaxed brain is multidimensional attention. It does not need viewpoints, data, opinions, memory to be alert. When all these directions cease, an organic, non-directed wakefulness remains. This is the threshold of "I am."

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This book is therefore about that which cannot be represented, objectified. It is about our real nature, truth, a truth that has nothing to do with the accumulation of facts. It is causeless, autonomous and only in this sense real. It needs no agent to be known and is its own proof. It is not having knowledge but immediate knowledge, knowing as being, and as such is not objectifiable. It is closer to us than all thought or feeling. It is our fundamental ground.

Since the “I am” is not an abstract, a concept or idea, the teaching of this truth is not a transmission of conceptual knowledge. The understanding of these dialogues does not occur in the mind. Of course the words, acting on the verbal level, bring the mind to greater clarity so that it has a clear geometrical representation of what is beyond it and also realizes the boundaries of its comprehension. But the fullness and real significance of these words lies in the fact that they do not arise from thinking but from the silence behind thought, the “I am.” The answers appear in this silence, the openness that is present in the absence of a personal entity, and they are permeated with “the perfume” of their source. In this lies their transformative power: they arise out of and point to our real nature, our autonomy, at every moment. They are thus a constant challenge, a challenge to belief, education and common sense. They free us from the reflex to take ourselves for a somebody, a thinker, a seeker, a doer, a sufferer.

If these sayings are not meant to be comprehended in the usual sense of the word, by the mind; if we are not to bring our past knowledge and experience to bear on the interpretation, how should we read this book?

As we read poetry. When reading poetry we don’t look for agreement or disagreement, the critical mind is suspended in order to let the impact of the poem make itself felt. When we read poetry, we are poets. We remain passively alert, letting the words be active, listening to how they echo on every level,

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how they sound, how they move in us, how we are moved by them. We wait attentively, without conclusion, for the poem to find us. This alert openness to all the resonances of the psychosomatic structure is vital to the truth-seeker. Like the poet, the truth-seeker lets go of his personality so that he is open to thoughts, feelings and reactions. Like the poet, the truth-seeker welcomes these as gifts, as pointers in the exploration.

Only in this openness can the silence in the words come home to us, for openness is the "I am," our real nature. The words are merely a catalyst to the real formulation which takes place in the reader.

E.E.

We must investigate, get to know ourselves, what we generally understand to be our body and psyche. Most of the time we live in reaction and double reaction, for example, when we react in anger we may also try to remain calm and collected. We try many different escape routes. By such means we constantly limit our possibilities and turn in a vicious circle.

The only way out is to simply observe. This allows us to take note of our physical reactions, our mental attitudes and patterns and our motivations at the exact moment they appear. It involves no evaluation, no analysis which is based on memory. At first the observer might find it difficult to be impersonal, to free himself from evaluating. He tends to emphasize the object and thus become its accomplice. Later, however, observing itself is emphasized and becomes more natural, more frequent. There comes a time when a neutrality installs itself between the observer and what he observes, and both poles lose their driving force. There is silence, we no longer nourish the conditioned object.

*What is the primary motivation for our actions?*

At certain moments, when alone, we feel a great lack deep within ourselves. This lack is the central one giving rise to



all the others. The need to fill this lack, quench this thirst, urges us to think and act. Without even questioning it, we run away from this insufficiency. We try to fill it first with one object then with another, then, disappointed, we go from one compensation to another, from failure to failure, from one source of suffering to another, from one war to another. This is the destiny to which a large part of humanity devotes itself. Some resign themselves to this state of being which they judge to be inevitable. Others at first deluded by the satisfaction brought about by these objects come to realize that they give rise to a surfeit and even to indifference. Some are brought to take a closer look. The object fully satisfies us for a short time during which we are back in our intrinsic nature, fulfillment. At the moment of fullness there is no awareness of an object. Thus the object cannot be the cause of our experience. It is essential to come to know these moments of joy without object.

We habitually attribute a cause to joy, we turn joy into an object because memory links the two together, but in reality they are of two entirely different natures. Thus we realize that the object is consumed in the joy of our being.

*Is it true that when we look at our surroundings from silent awareness they find their natural state of harmony?*

It is only through silent awareness that our physical and mental nature can change. This change is completely spontaneous. If we make an effort to change we do no more than shift our attention from one level, from one thing, to another. We remain in a vicious circle. This only transfers energy from one point to another. It still leaves us oscillating between suffering and pleasure, each leading inevitably back to the other. Only living stillness, stillness without someone trying to be still, is capable of undoing the conditioning our biological,

emotional and psychological nature has undergone. There is no controller, no selector, no personality making choices. In choiceless living the situation is given the freedom to unfold. You do not grasp one aspect over another for there is nobody to grasp. When you understand something and live it without being stuck to the formulation, what you have understood dissolves in your openness. In this silence change takes place of its own accord, the problem is resolved and duality ends. You are left in your glory where no one has understood and nothing has been understood.

*You have said that the only reason objects exist is so as to point to the ultimate perceiver, what we really are. Don't you think that there exist objects which, by their very nature, put us in direct contact with the Ultimate? I was thinking of works of art, for these seem to me to stem directly from the heart of the artist.*

When talking of works of art, we must first of all distinguish between true works of art and what we might call artistic works. A work of art always arises from the background: consciousness. Be it music, painting, architecture, poetry or sculpture, it is always seen by the artist in an instant, like a flash of lightning, as it surges forth from deep within him. Afterwards he elaborates it, gives it body and form, in time and space. The Last Supper by Leonardo da Vinci was undoubtedly conceived in perfect simultaneity. We can say the same of the Art of the Fugue by Bach and of certain of Mozart's compositions. An artist worthy of this name is never preoccupied by the material he uses, nor even by the subject matter or the anecdotal side of his work. His only interest is to arrange the different elements in perfect harmony so that they all fuse together and no longer impress the viewer as separate objects. The objective side of his work is thus eliminated. Tagore said that the aim of a true work of art is to give

a form to what escapes definition. Then the viewer will no longer be seduced by the material used nor even by the anecdotal content; instead he will be immediately plunged into a non-state which is the aesthetic experience. Later he will qualify the object as beautiful because it stimulated awareness of his own beauty. We can thus see that a work of art is really but a vehicle, a means by which we are led towards the experience. It is truly creative. We feel what the artist himself felt at the time of creation: a spontaneous offering free from all desire for approval.

All objects point to the Ultimate, but the difference between an ordinary object and a work of art is that the ordinary object is passive in its pointing towards the Ultimate whereas the work of art is active.

*You said that the object stimulates our own beauty but I thought beauty had no cause...*

Apparently a beautiful object stimulates our own beauty because sense perception functions in time and space. But in the moment of living the beauty there is no object nor experiencer present. It is a timeless moment, where you live your fullness. So cause and effect are only on the relative level. They are simply concepts because they cannot be experienced simultaneously. Consciousness is always one with its object. There are never two—always one.

*What gives the object this power?*

Only a work of art born from beauty, in simultaneity, can point to beauty. Beauty is the same in all. When the artist spontaneously offers his most profound nature and through his talent finds its nearest expression, it awakens in the viewer, the listener, his own profundity. But when you live in beauty

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and look from beauty, everything points in different ways to your wholeness. Living is no longer from the divided mind. All belongs to your fullness.

*But I am not sure everybody is capable of being openly receptive to these works of art.*

Before encouraging people to find beauty in a work of art, we must first teach them how to see, how to listen. We will soon realize how difficult this is: listening and seeing are arts in themselves. To arrive at aesthetic experience we must be totally receptive, welcoming, free from memory, so that we are open to the play of color, sounds, rhythms and shapes. This openness, seeing, is the light underlying all sensations and sooner or later, we find ourselves knowingly in this light. Looking at a work of art in this way is truly creative. There is no analysis in it. Each time we are struck by it, it brings us back to our real Self.

*As one comes closer to you, at some point or other you encourage your friends to learn to appreciate beauty in art and music and our surroundings. You obviously feel this is a very important “sadhana.” How exactly can an appreciation of art help us ask “Who am I?” more effectively?*

All our senses, sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell have been channelled or dispersed towards personal defense and aggression, used as tools to maintain the person. Through artistic appreciation the qualities of sensitivity and receptivity are awakened. Energy is sustained and the sense organs find their organic multi-dimensionality. In real listening the ear does not grasp the sound but remains totally relaxed and receptive to sound, silence and rhythm. It becomes a creative tool for the transmission of sound to the whole body. The

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senses no longer function fractionally but the body is one whole sense organ. Without this welcoming openness, global feeling and sensitivity, the question “Who am I?” remains intellectual. If it is ever to become a living question it must be transposed on every level of our being. The openness in the living question is the doorway to the living answer.

*L*iberation does not concern the person, for liberation is freedom from the person. Basically the disciple and teacher are identical. Both are the timeless axis of all action and perception. The only difference is that one “knows” himself for what he is while the other does not.

*But personality plays a very important part in everyday life, everything depends on it, doesn't it?*

The personality is nothing other than a projection, a habit created by memory and nourished by desire. Ask yourself the question “Who am I?” and lucidly observe that the questioner, thinker, doer, sufferer are all forms that appear and disappear within the consciousness of “I am,” the ever-living background. They have no reality in themselves. What we call the person is due to a mistake. Thoughts, feelings and actions appear and disappear indefinitely, creating an illusion of continuity. The idea of being a person, an ego, is nothing other than an image held together by memory.

Creativity is an expression of the ultimate but when there is a forgetting of oneself as the ultimate there is insecurity and identification with the created. The world of so-called objects is, like the ego, only a projection. Thinking that you are this or that is only part of your imagination, an hallucination. The

teacher helps you to understand, by his unconditional presence and his gift of teaching, that you are neither object nor ego. What you are fundamentally cannot be objectified. It does not refer to time and space.

*How can I free myself from mental confusion?*

Simply be aware of it. Observe how you function without the slightest idea of changing anything. Vigilance purifies the mind and sooner or later will place you knowingly beyond it.

You encounter ups and downs in your search for the Self because you do not yet see things in their true perspective—as a whole. This instability will continue just as long as you consider yourself as the body and mind. The mind will lead you astray until you perceive its true nature. This insight is the result of listening, free from the past. Live with the sayings of the teacher and the reminders of truth these awaken. These unspoken reminders are the perfume of that to which they refer. Attune yourself to this stillness and not with what you are not. Why identify with the world? All existence is an expression of consciousness. What you are fundamentally is without cause, is completely autonomous, so that taking yourself for an individual doer who lives in a world of choice is an illusion of the ego.

You must turn to this impersonal background as often as the opportunity beckons. Take note that your attention is constantly turned either towards objects or to ideas. A sense of being without qualification is completely unknown to you. Become the spectator, become aware of the natural flow of life, your motives, actions and what results from them. Observe the walls you have built around yourself. As you become more aware of your body and mind you will come to know yourself. As this image of things as you believe them to be subsides, you will have a clear insight of what you are

—something quite other than a product of the mind. You will gradually feel less and less involved in whatever comes up and one day you will discover yourself to be in the perceiving. Once you free yourself from the idea, “I am my body” and the consequences of this idea, you will awaken to your natural state of being. Give yourself up entirely to this discovery. True awareness cannot be obtained by projecting known factors in terms of concepts and perceptions. What you are fundamentally cannot be experienced through reason and is only reached once you eliminate what you are not.

A wilful ego hinders you from being. The witness must enter upon the scene, enabling the ego to be recognized for what it is, an object. This witness is a pedagogical device that opens the door to being. The ego cannot “know” itself because it identifies with what it thinks, feels, experiences. For the ego, there is nothing but resistance, defense, agitation. It is the witness that shines forth and shows up the ego for what it is, an illusion.

The contemplative witnessing state leads us to discover what we are not. We become aware of our body and thought-patterns, the reasons that motivate our actions of which we were previously scarcely conscious. When we observe thought without interference or evaluation, without reference, the thought vanishes in the observing. As the emphasis is no longer on the thought process and content but on the observing itself this witness state becomes a purification, a letting go, without there being a person who purifies or lets go. A whole world of unsuspected energies releases itself. Mental activity ceases to be agitated and spontaneously follows its natural course. We discover ourselves in attention. We completely abandon the “I am this, I am that,” reflex. This attention transcends the experience and the experiencer. It is pure awareness.



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The world exists only when we think about it; creation stories are for children. In reality the world is created at every moment. It is only memory that gives the false impression of continuity. The individual has no independent existence. It is a fabrication of memory and habit. Always agitated, it hopes and claims, striving to accumulate, searching for confirmation and security. Basically it is frightened and does not dare question itself profoundly.

All perceptions, all experiences are connected with time, are transitory, but our real nature transcends time. It is a lack of clear-sightedness that causes us to identify with temporality. When timeless moments solicit you, accept the invitation. Go deep within it, until you find yourself in your absence.

*Once you said: There is only truth. Is not the ego then also truth?*

The only truth is being, which is causeless, autonomous. When you see false things for what they are then that is illumination. Renunciation takes place without there being someone who renounces. In this, the direct path, free from choice, there is a freeing of energy and a spontaneous establishment in true being.

The world exists because you exist, but you are not the world. Objects of consciousness, names and forms, are the world. But reality, ever still, is beyond them. It is purely by reflex that you insist upon the name and form, and thus reality escapes you.

There is nothing outside consciousness. The universe, your personal I—all appear within it. The imagination has separated us from this awareness, this consciousness, and we have surrounded ourselves, closed ourselves in with fears, concepts and images. The waking state and dream state are both imposed upon this still awareness which we all have in common.

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What you do is of no importance whatsoever; what matters is the way in which you do it, your inner attitude. The role you play on the world's stage has no meaning other than the clear-sightedness with which you play it. Don't lose yourself in your performance-this only blurs the vision of your inner being.

Disinterested action does not bind you but, on the contrary, leaves you entirely free. Live in the moment, simply be. Making a choice depends upon memory and easily becomes slavery. Live as being and you will awaken to bliss.