Darkness

Ton Haarmans · Wide Open Windows



Darkness is not a metaphor.
Not a symbol.
Not a mood.
Not a spiritual nightlight.

It does not name despair.
It does not gesture toward mystery.
It does not stand in for the unknown.

It points to what never steps into view.

Before perception.
Before presence.
Before anything can be “before” something else.

Not an origin.
Not a ground.
Not even an absence.

What appears, appears.
But nowhere.

> “There’s a silence under the silence, if you can bear to listen.
> Not the pleasant quiet of a Sunday morning or the hush after snowfall,
> but something more total.
> A kind of null field that makes no promises and offers no explanations.
> It doesn’t cradle. It doesn’t soothe. It just is.
> And when the noise dies down—social, mental, bodily—that’s what remains.
> The raw presence of this moment, unaccompanied.”

Robert Saltzman

Darkness is not opposed to light.
It dissolves the stage on which light and dark could matter.

No subject.
No object.
No position from which anything could be handled.

Not a thing behind experience.
Not a depth beneath it.
Not a source it comes from.

No “from”.
No “to”.
No “in which”.

Just this.
Appearing without a place to stand.

Darkness as the collapse of referencing

Darkness is not the absence of perception.
It is the absence of the one who would stand in relation to perception.

Not blind.
Not blank.
Unowned.

What falls away is not experience, but the habit of positioning.
The reflex to stand somewhere with respect to what appears.

Nothing special happens.
No veil lifts.
No inner light turns on.

What dissolves is only the fiction that there is someone to whom experience is given.

What remains is not experience without a self,
but experience without a centre.

Appearance without a position.
A world without an inside.

What appears, appears.
But it does not arrive anywhere.

A personal register

The word “darkness” is not chosen here as a theory.
It is chosen because it fits how this feels when nothing is being managed.

Others might call this silence, emptiness, śūnyatā, wuji, the nagual.
I use “darkness” because it points away from light, clarity, consciousness, explanation.
Not toward an opposite, but toward what precedes all such contrasts.

Darkness is not.
What arises, arises from what does not arise.

Trying to imagine what darkness is cannot work.
It cannot be known.
It cannot become part of knowledge.

> For me, “darkness” is not an idea.
> It is how the body loosens when it stops bracing.
> A weight falling out of the chest.
> A room without edges.

I am drawn to the dark in simple ways.
Shadow more than glare.
Quiet more than noise.

The density of crowds, the brightness of spaces, the pressure of movement overload something in this body.
Darkness does not ask for orientation.

I do not know what awakening is.
Experiences come and go.
They are weather.

If there were a way to choose peace, it would already have been chosen.
The “I” that comments has no power of its own.
It is a viewpoint, not an agent.

“Endarkenment” is not possible.
Darkness is not something to be entered.
It is what remains when entering stops.

Radical non-duality

Radical non-duality strips even the path away.
No process. No progress. No arrival.

There is no separate one.
No timeline.
No movement toward what is already the case.

The seeker’s impulse is not wrong.
It is simply part of what appears.
But it does not lead anywhere.

Darkness is another name for this absence of distance.
Not a void behind the world, but the impossibility of locating a centre within it.

Darkness without dualism

The moment darkness is treated as something behind appearance, a split has already occurred.

Darkness is not behind the dream. It is the dream.

Not metaphorically. Structurally.
What appears does not conceal something else.

The veil is not hiding darkness.
The veil is darkness appearing as veiling.

Zen and Taoism

Zen speaks of loss rather than gain.
The dropping of the one who wants an answer.
“Not knowing is most intimate.”

Taoism gestures toward the unnamed.
Darkness within darkness, writes Laozi,
the gateway to all understanding.

Deus absconditus

Christian mysticism meets God as hiddenness.
Not absence, but ungraspability.

The Cloud of Unknowing does not reveal another realm.
It dissolves the will to know.

Voices in resonance

Robert Saltzman refuses consolation.
Shiv Sengupta speaks devotion without division.
Miranda Warren writes a love story without characters.
Douglas Harding points to centrelessness.
Joan Tollifson brings this into ageing, illness,
ordinariness.

Different tones.
The same disappearance.

Philosophy

Nietzsche’s abyss.
Heidegger’s unconcealment.
Deleuze’s becoming and dark precursor.

Not darkness as obscurity,
but darkness as the impossibility of final light.

Closing

Darkness is not an experience.
There is no one left to have it.

Not the unknown,
but the collapse of the need for the known.

Not depth,
but the absence of distance.

No origin.
No path.
No conclusion.

Only this.
Appearing without a place to stand.