

Being and Doing

By Marcus Bolt

(Originally for Subud Journal)

A lifetime ago, when I was desperately searching for a way to release my 'true self' from both inherited and adopted psychological 'hang ups', while at the same time yearning to become at one with nature and at peace within (ideas gleaned from a piecemeal study of mysticism, 'pop' Zen and the psychology of Jung), I was very impressed by something I read in Colin Wilson's *The Outsider*.

After taking an hallucinogenic drug, he'd had a mystical experience; 'but,' he wrote, 'it was like driving at night and switching off your headlights. You could see for miles around, but you had to crawl along at a snail's pace.'

What was required, he reasoned, was a spotlight on the roof as well. Thus one could drive at speed, headlights on, (analogous to living a normal life) yet still see for miles around (or explore and commune with the world of the inner self). He went on to claim he had found his 'spotlight' through the Gurdjieff movement — and following up on that link eventually led me to Subud.

And today, forty years later, it becomes clearer and clearer to me that 'gift' of the latihan is exactly that — a 'spotlight on the roof' — and it's a very powerful one.

What the spotlight does (for me) is to enable an integration of 'doing' and 'being', where 'doing' equals working in the world, making a buck, and paying the rent, while 'being' equates with keeping in touch with the moment, my environment, my body, my relationships and my inner self. I can't say I manage it all the time, but doing latihan somehow always gets me back on track when I lose the plot.

In other words, because I have no religion (and am embarrassed by Subud's patina of religious language) I do see the latihan process as a powerful 'personal development course', and its source as my personal 'life-style trainer'.

And I'm not alone in thinking this, as the following quote from Bapak reveals:

That is how it is and that is why this 'spiritual training' is training to be alive. In fact, the term 'spiritual' is not the right term to use. However, there was no other way to describe this training; there was not another term that fitted the nature of the latihan. When Bapak called it 'training to live', [people asked] 'What does "training to live" mean? Why do we have to train to live? We are already alive aren't we, so what do we need training for?' So Bapak had to change the name to 'spiritual training'. The correct term is 'training for human life'.... (67 NYC 3)

So, there you have it — training for human life. And probably all the great spiritual movements originally bore the same simple message, that a complete human life is about getting the balance right between engaging with this world (*doing*) — hopefully

contributing something positive to civilisation — while at the same time *being* —keeping in touch with nature, our inner selves and the source of compassion and love.

But we humans do like to move up in the ranks, so we create religions and 'isms' and corporations. We also like to dress stuff up (the 'mystification of experience' syndrome, as beloved by mullahs and priests, experts and pundits) and thus we complicate and obfuscate the simple, but eternal, message and spend far too much time doing and not enough being.

Let's not, therefore, turn Subud into a 'spiritual way' — a small step from a religion — or into a full-blown corporation, both with implicit hierarchies and 'one coat fits all' branding plus the consequent stifling of the individual. Let's not aggrandise ourselves with an intolerant 'we, the chosen few, have the only way' attitude, either. Because, while we are busy doing the 'we're right', defensive stuff, we can't be compassionate and loving, as is proven by religious fundamentalism.

Instead, let's re-instate Bapak's 'training for human life' concept, while at the same time employing the KISS formula (keep it simple, stupid), thus avoiding the mistakes all the great religions have made — and are continuing to make today.

Humour (especially laughing at oneself) is a good way of keeping it simple. So here's a contribution — my favourite *graffito* from Nigel Rees' 'Graffiti 4':

To be is to do. — *Sartre*

To do is to be. — *Socrates*

Do-be-do-be-do. — *Sinatra*