

A BRIEF- BUT MOST IMPORTANT- ENCOUNTER

Aldous Huxley and Bapak

“Several interesting people came to visit Pak Subuh in New York. Among them were Aldous Huxley and his Italian wife. I had first met Aldous in the thirties, when he and Gerald Heard used to come regularly to Ouspensky’s meeting in Colet, say nothing, and go away. He had entered himself as a Subud probationer in Los Angeles, and was on a short visit to the East.

He put three questions to Bapak:

“*Who are you? Are you a prophet, or an incarnation?*” Bapak had replied that he made no such claim. He was one who showed the way. He had opened a door which people could go through if they wished.

“*But,*” said Aldous, “*you cannot divest yourself of your own position. You are the founder of Subud, and its spiritual leader. How can your followers help being dependent on you?*” “No, Bapak is not a leader. He does not go in front. At first people may misunderstand and think that Bapak will lead them. But later, if they practise the latihan sincerely, they learn that God alone is their leader and guide, and they do not depend upon Bapak.”

“*Even if you are not their leader, you are at least the teacher. They must learn from you and to that extent be dependent on you.*” “No; there is no teaching in Subud and therefore no teacher. ***Bapak may give explanations, but they are provisional only. As time goes on, each one gains his own understanding, and no longer needs explanations.***”

Aldous was clearly not satisfied but said: “It would be wonderful if it could only be true. This world needs more than anything else people who can make their own independent judgments.” (“Witness” pages 342-343 by John Bennett)

For many of us, this shows both Bapak and Subud at their best! First, these words show an unusual amount of respect for the individual and his or her own experience which are clearly stated as the *most* important things. Aldous Huxley says “It would be wonderful if it could only be true” probably because organisations cannot seem to do this. More usually they end up inflicting a

template of instructions, teachings, words onto individuals who are expected to fit in. Organisations all too readily encourage or demand conformity rather than the expression of individuality that Bapak is talking about here!

Second, it shows directly and unambiguously what Bapak's role is: he is not putting himself, his personality, his beliefs etc to the front at all. His role is simply to give *provisional* explanations to those who have not enough experience to "make their own independent judgments" based on "their own understanding." It is clear from this that the latter are the more important things! This then gives encouragement for individuals to understand their experience in many different ways- for some it may be as a Christian or a Buddhist or Hindu rather than as a Muslim, e.g.; for me it is as a Jungian...the varieties are potentially as different as individuals are! In all of this the one unity is...*the latihan*. We do not have to look for it anywhere else!