

The Visionary Approach

By Luthfi O'Meagher

Editor's Note: This article has been extracted from a private letter written by Luthfi O'Meagher, with Luthfi's permission. The letter was written to comment on the current state of the Widjojo project, but that material was not suitable for general publication, and we have retained instead Luthfi's general thoughts on Subud and enterprise, and his interesting reminiscences.

Vision

'Where there is no vision the people perish.'[1]

The statement comes towards the end of the Book of Proverbs, and is attributed to King Solomon. The Hebrew word translated as 'vision' is *hazon*; it designates that which God makes known to his prophets, and also their ability to hear and see the things which he reveals to them. But amongst the people, that is, ourselves, there is also the question of whether we can perceive the vision that the prophets are attempting to pass on to us.

In my experience, there is no doubt that Bapak was, as he said he was, a Messenger of God, that he was drawn up by the Archangels and made his Ascension to the throne of God, in the manner of the Messengers and Prophets of old. But I now realise that because of the fallen nature of this world, and the fallen nature of ourselves, his mission was very much more difficult than I appreciated in the heady days of 1959 when I was opened at Coombe Springs. Like the Prophet Muhammed, Bapak's mission unfolded over a period of some thirty years, each new unfolding taking place as he deemed we were ready to receive it. His Large Enterprises came near the end of his mission, and it is clear from statements in his talks that due to the fallen state of the world, and of ourselves, there was no certainty that we would learn to stand on our own feet, learn to understand his intentions for Large Enterprises, or that his mission would survive for long after his death.

At the Widjojo Centre in July 1980 he said this:

The reason the world is extremely disturbed, especially just now, is that the world at this moment is experiencing a very powerful expansion of the Nafsu. One can say that the Nafsu today rules everywhere in the world. The result is that there is no room for peace whatsoever between various countries; because the satanic has become king everywhere. Everywhere, everyone is trying to grab from everybody else. What rules in the world today is the greed and feeling of arrogance of the Nafsu. This leads people to want to be right themselves, to only want to win over others and to obtain the best for themselves without regards to the needs of other people. In the midst of this to mankind comes a reality in the form of the Latihan Kedjiwaan.

If, like me, you were brought up in a background in which the words of the King James Bible became familiar, you cannot help realizing that we, the people, always want to do exactly the opposite of what the Messenger has been sent to reveal to us for the world to be restored to balance, and this passage is likely to come to mind:

And the Lord said unto Moses : ‘Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them; they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, “These be thy Gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt...”’ [2]

The original Messengers of God like Abraham and Moses, were shown the meaning of past, present and future, therefore the purpose of God’s creation. They established, re-established and extended the Eternal Covenant with the power of the One Almighty God, showed us God’s ways, and the boundaries which Almighty God has set to all created things. This Covenant, if kept by the people, kept the chaos of floods, pestilences, famine and war at bay. All the Messengers of God, including Bapak, recognize the other Prophets and Messengers of God and reaffirm the Covenant, at the same time extending the grace of the Power of Almighty God to mankind in new ways. Muhammed was the last of the Prophets, the last of the ways of the great religions to be established on earth. Bapak brought the Latihan, not something like a mushroom which he stumbled on in the woods and didn’t really understand, not some energy derived from an obscure Sufi sect, or esoteric martial art, but, as he said, the Roh Illofi, the natural force which can purify us and lead us through the labyrinth of energies within us which belong to this world, and gradually make us aware of the enveloping energy of the Angels united with the power of the One Almighty God, so that our life itself becomes the return to God.[3]

To make the journey so that our lives become ‘the return to God’, in our fallen state in a world dominated by satanic forces cannot be easy, and it is not surprising that many give it up. Just doing the Latihan can lead to only just doing the Latihan, to using it to condone whatever one feels like doing, to apathy, and to the seeking of the comfort of unanimity and euphoria generated by meetings and conduct tacitly designed to avoid action, - or it can lead to the challenge of dealing with difficult situations and resolving them with ‘right thinking and right action concordant with the Will of God’: which is the aim of Subud. The journey cannot be made, as Bapak said, without making efforts in the world, which means following the Latihan and using whatever talents and abilities we have as an endeavour where through obstacles and difficulties and the reconciling power of God, we can learn the way. The material world which we encounter is the world of Fact; there are no values in this world. Values come from the Cosmic energies from beyond this world, and can only express themselves through action, by merging with the facts of the material world.

I have come to the conclusion that Bapak’s mission, as it stemmed from a natural force, unlike a teaching like that of Gurdjieff or John Bennett, was ultimately a matter of spiritual ecology. As in the parable of Jesus, the sower went forth to

sow and most of the seed did not survive, and that which did fall on bad soil, got eaten by birds or choked with weeds. The landscape that it produced was useless scrubland. But supposing that within that scrubland there were a few saplings of deciduous trees? If some of these began to survive and grow, then in time the weeds would diminish, the ecology would change, and move towards that of a forest. Such a process might take a long time, would depend on the Will of God, but it would also depend on what this totally different ecology attracted to it.

The Quakers

When Bapak, at the World Congress in Canada, asked the English to build in England the venue for the next World Congress, the Chairman of Subud Britain asked me as co-ordinator of the Enterprise Association, which I had set up, to form a panel of experts who could establish how this could be done. Every single person who had anything to do with such a project agreed to come down to Kenfield Hall. Hearing this, Bapak said that he would also like to come, and it was clear to me that he would choose the team to build Anugraha from those present. This he did, and in his talk, hoped that we would emulate the Quakers, 'who received something similar to the latihan but not as complete'. He hoped that we would surpass their achievements, or at least equal them.

This passage comes from *Quakers in Science and Industry* by Arthur Raistrick:

The unification of life among the Quakers, their refusal to separate business activities from the principles and disciplines which regulated their religious life, gave them a stability and soundness of practice which was unusual in their day. The advice on trade are numerous and extensive, and the frequent letters addressed by Fox and others to all such as are engaged in trade, emphasise again and again the idea that trade and other occupations show forth truth to the world, and that traders must be scrupulous to keep their dealings in the spirit of truth.[4]

The advice of 1675 says ; 'Let friends and brethren in their respective meetings watch over each other in the love of God and care of the Gospel; particularly admonish that none trade beyond their ability, nor stretch beyond their compass; and that they use few words in their dealings, and keep their word in all things, lest they bring through their forwardness dishonour to the precious truth of God.'

For the Quakers, who initiated the industrial revolution and played a major part in its innovations in manufacturing, commerce, and banking, there was no scope for 'anything goes' in the name of God, nor holy frauds and misrepresentation by angelic dispensation. All work was undertaken to show God's truth and to serve the needs of mankind. The profits and fortunes that many made had nothing to do with self-interested manipulation, but were considered a Grace from Almighty God which might, or indeed might not, be bestowed on those who undertook to serve his Will with honest endeavour.

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'The Framework of Reference'

After the World Congress in Tokyo , a large UK delegation went on to Cilandak. This was 1967, halcyon days before Large Enterprises, when we called each other Brothers and Sisters and experienced it. Bapak said he felt this feeling between us and he asked us all up to his house and addressed us before we left. I crept in at the back, but suddenly a door opened by my elbow, a chair was placed and Bapak sat down. He then tested with us what was within the mind and what was beyond the mind of Confucius, the Buddha, Jesus Christ, the Prophet Muhammad and Bapak himself. He showed us that there was something within the mind of Confucius and the Buddha, and nothing beyond it. He asked us to feel the Alif, the vertical spiritual force, and he said that this had come first with the Prophet Abraham and with all the subsequent Messengers of God. He showed us how there was nothing within the mind of Jesus, but there was something beyond from other worlds. It was the same with the Prophet Muhammad, but Bapak pointed out that with Jesus in addition to the Alif, there was the horizontal feminine force which made the cross. He told us that this was why Christianity and Islam were inseparable. Bapak showed us that the Alif had come again with the Latihan of Subud. He then tested what was within his own mind, and there was nothing, and what was beyond the mind of Bapak, and as with Jesus and Muhammad, there was something.

It seems fairly clear to me that Bapak and the higher powers decided that he should leave us before his mission was fully established, as happened to Jesus Christ and to the Prophet Muhammad, with the hope but not the certainty, that in time some of the seeds which he had planted would grow to the point where there were enough people around who could begin to grasp his intentions and start to put them into practice.[5] If I am right this places an enormous responsibility on the few.

In the religion of Islam there is the Koran, and then there are the interpretations of the Koran by the Prophet, and the things which the Prophet said and did, and the interpretations and judgements made by scholars of the various schools over the centuries. These are referred to as the 'the Framework of Reference' to which the individual on his journey can refer before making his next step.[6]. To ignore the Framework of Reference which Bapak laid down for the conduct of his Large Enterprises, seems to me not only the height of personal arrogance and folly, but also the obstruction of something Willed by the One Almighty God for the benefit of mankind. A dangerous course of action to take.

The following five paragraphs (from Bapak's talks about Anugraha) give us the basic Framework of Reference we need to guide us:

- 1) 'It is very important that those who are working to build Anugraha should be aware that it is not they who are building it, but God, and that they are merely channels for him. If they forget this they can destroy themselves, but if they remember it, then, in the future, many great things could happen in England, greater than Anugraha.'
- 2) 'If someone builds a house or succeeds in a project with a store of capital, it is not a gift from God, for he was already rich when he started, but if we after having nothing have something, it is a gift from Almighty God. For this reason we

should do our very best, because the only way for our lives to be always protected and blessed by Almighty God is for us to do something honest and pure, always turning to Almighty God and worshipping him.'

3) 'We are able to build Anugraha in a way that is totally miraculous. Logically it doesn't make sense, but we can do it. Bapak is not looking for lots of members in Subud, because what is important is what those of us do who are really in Subud. The "lots of members" will come later, depending on what we do in the meantime.'

4) 'Yes, you cannot do it with your own strength. They wanted to do it with their own power, and so it became influenced by the material force.... So don't do it with force ...because there will be a way. You will find there will be a way. The way will open by itself.... And Bapak told them not to do it like that, but you cannot tell them.'

5) 'If we do something useful and significant while we have nothing, that is from the power of God - that is a gift from Almighty God. In what we are doing, always try to do right, to act rightly, because we have been given God's love and so that we shall be protected in our actions. We will succeed if what we do is always honest and always sticks to the truth.'

Item (4) was concerning Anugraha two years before my term; it is perhaps the most important principle.

Ageing investors like myself made their commitments and investments in the early large Subud enterprises like Widjojo and Anugraha, not on the basis of a commercial prospectus, but on the basis of the framework of reference given by Bapak in his talks.

The Governance of Anugraha

I ran my companies employing skilled craftsmen for some twenty years and became used to dealing with good and bad millionaires. Bapak visited our works and advised us to expand, which we did, but the massive recession of 1984 forced us to close down and I traded whilst insolvent for three years under the guidance of John Pitman FCA, a brilliant company doctor and licensed insolvency practitioner.

I was sitting at the back of the Anugraha AGM in 1986 when the Chairman announced that the Company was to go into voluntary liquidation, and was elected a Director from the floor of the meeting and subsequently Managing Director, under the resolution that we should 'try to rescue Anugraha so that Bapak's vision for mankind could be realized'. My condition was that John Pitman would advise the company, and that the Bank would not put in a receiver.

Leonard van Hien recently wrote to the PTSW Directors: 'At the time when the bank was sold, it appeared inevitable that PTS Widjojo would also go, leaving only a struggling Anugraha. The subsequent years unfortunately saw the company go

through traumas that would, in more experienced hands, have been avoided.’ This is more or less what John Pitman said when the Board showed us the situation at Anugraha and what they were doing.

In my three years as M.D. I experienced the reality or the potential, first hand, of everything that Bapak said about Anugraha in some forty-five talks. After my dismissal on the initiative of the powerful shareholders’ representatives, the head of the Bank of Scotland telephoned me and said: ‘So they’re going to sack the only person who understood Anugraha.’ It took me eleven years to pick up the shattered pieces and ensure that no-one lost their homes or suffered too much hardship.

I then wrote *The Governance of Anugraha*, as a result of a receiving, in two volumes, setting out Bapak’s intentions, and a detailed description of everything that had happened over the three years, for the benefit of those in thirty to a hundred years’ time who might like to know, if Subud survives, what happened to this amazing project, which was to have been a central pillar of Subud, and how it was destroyed. I wrote it for three people now and four in the future. It has in fact been read by sixty people now and is now on the net for anyone to download.

During my time as MD, Bapak unexpectedly came over for an eye operation on a private visit. He asked if he could drive around the building, but in the end he came three weeks running, and gave talks and testing to some eight hundred people each time, from all over Europe, brought there by the work of Andreas Zys, as Co-ordinator of the International Subud Centre. As the crowds parted and I led Bapak, now a frail old man in a wheel chair, from the library to the dining room, I realized that for him this was the final result: the Af’al. Bapak had the Zat, the receiving; the Sifat was the turning of this into a realistic project in time and with a place; we with his aid had at last produced the Asma, the work permeated by the Kedjiwaan; and now here was the Af’al, as Bapak drank coffee, had lunch, and gave talks and tests to Subud Members. As I led Bapak, I kept turning round and his eyes were saying: ‘It’s up to you now.’ During lunch he sent the Directors a message recorded in his collected talks by Raymond Lee: ‘Bapak was delighted by Anugraha on that last visit. During the latihans I remember him saying that this was what Anugraha was really for, and that if people understood this there would be no problem with money.’

The Black Page

The Governance of Anugraha is a long hard read, intended for those many years ahead who will have to build it again. In Volume II there is a black page. Beyond it I describe how Anugraha was destroyed in two months. Just before that there are three paragraphs, parts of which seem to me to be even more relevant now than when I wrote them in January 1996.

By setting up Anugraha in response to a receiving from Almighty God, Bapak established the enterprise as a Covenant[7] in which all action was intended to be a triad of Function, Being and Will.[8] Subud Members were invited to participate

and support this enterprise as part of Bapak's mission and vision for mankind. The responsibility of those appointed to direct such an enterprise, in which three thousand Subud members participated in order to support this vision and not primarily for commercial gain, was to ensure that whatever was done was done in the common interest.

Virtually all enterprises of commercial companies and governments today are conducted at the purely functional level. Once locked into that culture, there is no way out, as the system does not contain within it the elements which enable something different to emerge. It is clear to me that Europe, and especially England, have the duty to find a way out of it by establishing corporate cultures which are based on Function, Being and Will, and in which the mind is fully restored to its position as mediator between the higher and the lower worlds. Such cultures, essential if the world is to survive, are hazardous, and can only be established at this time in a small way on the periphery of society. It is absolutely clear to me that Anugraha provided such a model. (And indeed all Bapak's Large Enterprises.)

No doubt the Inquisitors (Catholic) and the image smashers (Protestant) were sincere in what they were doing, and felt it essential for the good of Christendom.[9] Similarly, I don't doubt that all those who participated in the events described beyond the 'black page' were totally sincere according to their own lights. What I have to show, for the benefit of posterity, is that those lights were at the purely functional level, as a result of temperament, education, and business experience, and that they were not the light of the common interest, and therefore were culturally in conflict with the Anugraha project.

My experience of the last seven years has shown me that, for the moment, the Subud Association has become collectively locked into a situation from which there is no way out. It does not contain within it the elements which could enable something different to emerge, and it does not attract people of the calibre which would enable something different to emerge.

We do not find many people of outstanding ability in Subud; in a small organization we have too many who pretend to have it. We are the lame and the halt who came to the wedding feast given by the King, because everyone else was too busy to come, in Jesus's parable. We have, on the evidence, too many who have come without a wedding garment, for which they might get thrown into outer darkness.[10] But there are a few now, and enough to start to clear the way to do something different.

A Postscript and Clarification from Luthfi O'Meagher

The above article was extracted from a private letter which I wrote to a long-standing Subud member with responsibility to set out, for the benefit of Trustees, the pros and cons of selling the Widjojo building at this particular time. The first part of that letter was based on empirical thinking; the second part, from which the article has been extracted, was based on 'religious thinking', and 'metaphysical thinking'.

One cannot demolish or disprove the symbolism of ‘religious thinking’, but one could find it devoid of meaning. The detailed comments of four Subud Vision editors on the first draft of my article have revealed to me a situation which I had no idea existed, and I feel like someone who has sent something to a Peace magazine during the Cold War, unaware that it is run by the Communist Party and has a hidden agenda, or a ‘framework of reference’ based on Marxist-Leninist thinking and dialectical materialism. Although their project is called ‘Subud Vision’, in my opinion the editors reveal that they have constructed a ‘framework of reference’ which is opposed to vision, and which is in conflict with Subud (Susila, Budhi, Dharma) and I have therefore asked for and have been granted the opportunity to comment on the situation as I see it, in this postscript.

The founders of Subud Vision have had the courage to see the Subud Association as engaged in a tradition-based enquiry. I believe that such an enquiry has a history which can neither be ignored nor abandoned. The tradition-based enquiry does not begin with what we think, but begins with Bapak, the Latihan which he received, and the guidance and clarifications which he gave during his lifetime. Any rational justification must take into account that the very nature of the experience of the Latihan, and the journey which it offers, will create a diversity of stand-points, some incompatible with each other. But the ‘state of the Complete Man, who is capable of contacting the powerful Life-Stream’, remains the overall symbol for the individual undertaking the journey which can never be completed, if the tradition-based enquiry is to be called Subud.

When I wrote *The Governance of Anugraha*, <http://www.btinternet.com/~hhoubart/GOA/GOA.html>, I found I could only communicate my experience in terms of the three realms: Supercelestial, Celestial, and Terrestrial - common parlance in Mediaeval Christianity and amongst the key figures of the Renaissance - which needed to be constantly aligned. Recently Dr. Joseph Milne has written *Metaphysics and the Cosmic Order*, published by the Temenos Academy, in which he re-introduces the three types of thinking associated with these three realms as essential to be re-integrated if we are to survive the present global crisis.

Thus we have ‘religious thinking’ which is revelation, which can only be communicated in symbolic form, associated with the Realm of God and his Angels. We have ‘metaphysical thinking’ which is a gift to the mind of man when activated by the soul - the ‘intellect’ of Mediaeval and Renaissance Christianity: what Henry Corbin called the *Mundus Imaginalis* in Islam, and the poet Kathleen Raine always used his term for the realm of poetic imagination and inspiration. Finally we have empirical thinking, which is thinking as a result of observation and experiment: the Terrestrial Realm of science and business mechanisms, once so carefully aligned and integrated into the great Cosmos itself by those who initiated the birth of Western science in Europe; the realm which for many in our fallen world is the only realm in which they live and move and have their being.

The experiences of the three realms and their alignment and integration with the Divine Order of the Cosmos were part of the unexpected gift of Anugraha, a grace

given by the One Almighty God. They had nothing to do with my state, and everything to do with the Covenant which Bapak had been granted for the Subud Association and for all mankind. Perhaps many more would have had this experience if Anugraha had been allowed to continue.

At the end of his book, Dr Milne writes:

The real problem lies with the circumscribed view of reality that prevails in our age. We can trace this back to various shifts in the theological and philosophical thinking that began in the late Middle Ages....

Nevertheless, the narrow, fixed view of reality is beginning to lose its hold. This is certainly the case with modern philosophy and in some theology. The complacent certitude of most nineteenth century scholarship now appears to us as absurdly arrogant. We are becoming aware that reality cannot be so easily taken hold of and that it is much more subtle than was supposed by the logical positivists. But perhaps the most significant change underway is the scholarly understanding of ancient Greek and Mediaeval thought which has long been interpreted through the presuppositions of Enlightenment Rationalism. Philosophy is beginning to resituate itself within the whole of the Western tradition once again, leaving behind the philosophical provincialism of the last several hundred years....

But aside from these hopeful signs within academic scholarship, there is in Western society generally a growing sense that the prevailing materialistic values lack real depth and meaning, and that the Cosmos cannot be a mere accident hurtling its way to final extinction. But more blatantly than this, the ecological crisis calls for a united human response to nature as a whole. One might say that the threat of human extinction is nature's reply to treating it as a mere resource for human manipulation and consumption.

The symbol of the Complete Man which Bapak gave us at the very beginning, using the words Susila, Budhi, Dharma, is that of the man in whom the Three Realms are integrated both with each other and with the Divine Cosmos itself. The tradition-based enquiry on which Subud Vision has embarked will have to take account of this in establishing its framework of reference.

I believe that the Subud Association has to have a reformation if it is to survive, a reformation initiated by men of ability but who also hold to the framework of reference of Susila, Budhi, Dharma, which words symbolize the state of the Complete Man. The abandonment of this framework in favour of Enlightenment thinking and the adoption of post-Bapak and post-God myths and stand-points is a secularization of Subud which, in my opinion, will lead to a similar journey to that taken by those controlling Bapak's Large Enterprises.

Notes:

1. Proverbs 29

2. Exodus 32 vs 1- 29

3. *The Hidden Tradition of the Kingdom of God*, Margaret Barker. Published by S.P.C.K.2007 ISBN 10: 0-281-05846 - 6; *Temple Theology*, Margaret Barker. Published by S.P.C.K.2004 ISBN 10: 0-281-05634 - X

4. *Quakers in Science and Industry*, Arthur Raistrick, Banisdale Press, 1950

5. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Margaret Barker, 2000, ISBN 0 567 08716 6

6. *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*, Tariq Ramadan, ISBN 0-19-517111 -X

7. *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* Margaret Barker, 2003, ISBN 0567 689 8

8. *The Dramatic Universe*, Volume 2, 'The Foundations of Moral Philosophy', Chapter 27. J. G. Bennett, 1961

9. *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment (17th Century)*, Frances A. Yates, 1972, ISBN 0-7448-0051X; *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age*, Frances A Yates, 1979, ISBN 0-7100-0320 X

10. Matthew 22 vs 1 - 10. Authorized Version