

DIALOGUE BETWEEN AGHA AND BRAZILIAN THERAPISTS

KILYOS, TURKEY - AUGUST 1982

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q : I have been working with the Fischer-Hoffmann system of therapy for five years. At first it was very strong and powerful for me, but now I feel myself losing interest, mainly because I have doubts about the importance of this technique. I ask myself: what am I doing with the persons? I feel that they open themselves to me very much after going through the initial therapy, but after some time they close themselves again. I feel the need of finding some guidelines for the future, and I feel I cannot do this by myself.

Since I am in the Tradition, what can I do to combine the two things, the Tradition and the therapy? Are there some guidelines you could give us for people who have done this therapy? That is my main question, other people can have others.

A : There are many techniques, but none of these techniques are completely successful. They can produce a temporary improvement, but after that, the person needs another orientation.

It is clear that there is no single technique for a psychologically disturbed person that can be used for every nature of psychosis, because it depends on the kind of psychosis involved, how deep it is, what its basis is, and other factors you know about already.

Why is this so? This happens, because in the West, even with all the modern technological advances, people don't really know what the brain is. So if you are working with something you don't know one hundred percent, your efforts will always be hesitant.

Personally, I think the most important way to treat a patient is to get to know him gradually and completely. It is not enough for people just to talk to you to help you to establish a picture of their problems or psychological condition, because obviously, if they are disturbed, they will hide one thing or exaggerate others.

At that point the picture you get is out of focus. If you then work on that picture or focus, on what basis are you working? On this or on that? You have to begin by saying: "I want to make a picture of this person." And then you ask yourself "In order to make it, what do I need? Let's say that I need "the colour of the eyes, the hair, the lips, the angle of the nose, the shape of the bones" in order to make this picture.

The patient or client doesn't have to tell you: "My hair is red" because you can already see its colour. If he wants to say "It is red" when it is black, you say "Okay, it's red" while still placing the right colour in your own mind's picture. So little by little, you come to know the person completely.

You get to know him with some detachment. You have to be able to look at him with a certain objectivity, because it might even be dangerous to get yourself too much involved with his or her problems. You simply get to know the person.

There is one thing you have to extract from the Tradition that doesn't exist in western psychotherapy, and you have to introduce it very carefully into your therapy, at the right moment and in the right quantity.

What is that magic ingredient? Does it exist in Freud, Jung, Adler, Reich or any other therapy? It doesn't, maybe because these people thought it wasn't important enough. They couldn't perceive any usefulness for this thing. Maybe they didn't know how to use it or perhaps they were afraid of it. It's a simple thing which is actually the difference between life and death: it's a quality called love.

In none of the therapies in the West do you ever find some indication of the how and why or use of love. I don't know why such an important component was left aside. I think it's due to the fact that it can't be scientifically controlled: they cannot turn it into their slave. Since you cannot use it incorrectly, people would have to use it correctly or not use it at all. So they decided not to use it.

I think the basis of any therapy at all is 50% love and 50% understanding of the person. If you put those two ingredients together, you will automatically develop a sound attitude and technique towards the person and towards his or her problems. For

me, this love is the absent factor in western psychological thought.

If you include it, you will be able to make it work for you and for the client. By this, I mean that you can in fact use it, by saying to yourself "Yes I can do it"; if only because I am saying to you that you can.

Since the Tradition is not a democracy, I am able to say this. Love is something that either works or doesn't.

Q : How can we get to know a person?

A : You begin by using the classical kind of psychological or psychiatric interview, in other words the semi-medical situation. The person is lying there, someone is taking notes, and the questions you need to put should be changed in their shape so they can be accepted by the person as conversation. This means you can meet your clients in a restaurant, a coffee shop, or in a night-club. You can walk with them by the river and talk. It is a good idea to begin by breaking the classical situation of white jacket, stethoscope and writing pad.

Secondly, after talking with them, find some topics about which you can both talk; it may be hunting, fishing, books, travel or anything at all. Let them talk about those subjects.

Afterwards, enhance your own enthusiasm about the subject, talking a lot about it, taking them to whatever point you want, in order to fill in the gaps in your picture. Part of your ability must be how you do this, how you lead them. By those means, you get at their picture and complete it.

Then you think: "This or that area is still blank"; you then mobilize the enthusiasm of your client for fishing or whatever else you are talking about, leading him towards the gaps.

It may take you several different efforts to fill in those gaps, so do not expect to arrive there suddenly, by a jump. A restraint or shutting down on the part of the person may occur, and if he notices you are taking him to that area, it may produce a negative effect. He may then retract himself, and if you notice any symptom of closing on his part, leave the subject aside and try it again later, in some other place or in a different context.

Again, that is the only way to do it. There is no fast way of filling in this picture. But I repeat, this picture is drawn objectively, by keeping a distance, and not subjectively.

Q : Knowing how to carry out our therapy technique is very important. We were trained to do it and we have been successful, because the technique is very powerful, but my problem now is to carry the therapy forward with the person after they have successfully finished the initial part of their therapy. They have newly-open hearts and want something more: what can one do with them?

A : You can't decide 100% that this person has finished the therapy.

Q : As far as the technique goes?

A : As far as the technique goes, you can apply something new. If you conclude that the technique has reached a point where you can stop, obviously you will not simply abandon the person. What you have to do is keep in touch. Then you have to give them something else.

Q : That's the point.

A : Well, I know what I would give them, it would be the Sufi Tradition, but sometimes it's hard to do because their various conditionings make it difficult. The religious, social, sexual, political, economical or any other conditionings make it difficult for them to begin studies in the Tradition at the point from which they should be starting. I would tell them this in any way I can.

Actually, I don't know of any better thing to help them. Which means this: if I apply a little thought, I can change a fuse, fix a tyre, command an army division or teach the Tradition. So my abilities are limited.

What I would suggest is the following: as Miguel did in Argentina, perhaps you can translate a book of the Tradition into Portuguese and give it to be read by people. You can also, as some people do in the West, place them in the hands of the Church. If that produces a deep and constant effect on them, why not?

Q : I am going to ask you a wide personal question. I have been trying for three years to write you a letter to get an answer to a question I will put to you now. I am a psychiatrist and I do my work in an efficient way, but I don't find happiness inside myself doing my work. That is my only question, and I would like to have your help.

A : Well, my help is always available, and if you couldn't write to me for three years, I can give you a stamp if you want, as long as the letter is not written in Portuguese.

I think that any dissatisfaction you have in your work is understandable. This is perhaps because you criticize yourself, and from your own critical point of view, your work is not good enough.

So I suggest to you that you introduce some things from the Tradition into your work and, as far as possible, into your treatment, and I believe you'll get more satisfaction because you will have better action and a bigger percentage of success than is the case now.

But don't wait three years to write me, because remember, a letter takes less than three weeks to arrive, so it will take three years and three weeks for each letter to get to me, and I can become neurotic waiting for it.

Q : You know Agha, one thing. I myself have solved my own problem about working with my therapy and being in the Tradition, but I am sure that sometimes there have been delicate situations involving using elements of the Tradition in our work. From what you say, I think one can wrongly use elements of the Tradition in what we do. How can they be introduced?

A : You introduce them through publications, through old stories of the Tradition such as the Nasrudin tales, and through other people. Or else you use what you have learnt from the Tradition in your work.

I can't tell you to do things you don't know how to do. If you know a subject well, you change it into a familiar and useful tool, and you can use it as you feel, gently or sternly. I repeat again, you have to evaluate the person and you have to judge his capacity to use the information you are giving him, so that there is a feedback

to you. If I want to tell you something, I can tell you, but you have to understand it first before passing it on, otherwise it is lack of responsibility.

Q : I'm coming to the conclusion that my work and my development in the Tradition are the same thing.

Q : When I use my own connection with the Tradition with a patient, could the fact that I am taking into consideration my own expectations be damaging for the patient?

A : It depends on your intention. If your intention is really and truly to help the patient and, through this help, to learn a little bit more for yourself, by no means will this be damaging to the patient.

As I have said, you cannot damage a patient by misusing something from the Tradition, but you can certainly make him confused when you use something from the Tradition that is not really familiar to you. Nevertheless, you still do not damage him.

Q : Is there any specific knowledge in the Tradition we could think about and use with the patient? I received one indication, which was to work with sounds and colours with my patients, but I don't know where to look for that kind of material, neither with whom. How does one look for material of the Tradition that is not part of the general information we all receive?

A : There are no specific works designed for this purpose. Masters of the Tradition who studied questions concerning psychological disturbances and illness used, and still use, music, colours and zikrs.

I will send you some colour patterns and some music that can be useful, and you can also use the zikr in such a way that when you have a therapeutic situation with a person coming up, you do your personal zikr for 15 minutes before the meeting. This will increase your energy and programme you to communicate with the person at a deeper level.

So, I will send you this material three years from now.

Q : Please, not three years; three months.

Q : Three days?

A : One month.

Q : Was that a personal indication or can we all of us use this material?

A : It's for everybody.

Q : Is it possible to get to know the human brain completely?

A : Yes.

Q : But if it's not available in western knowledge, how can we know it? Can we learn it?

A : You can learn it, but I'm not going to teach you. The responsibility is very great, the load is very heavy, and it is very dangerous.

Those who know the functioning of the human brain have a great responsibility, because it is an area of great danger where mistakes are not allowed.

Q : Is it useful or worthwhile to undertake therapy in spite of us not having this knowledge?

A : Yes. You don't have to know everything completely. If you know a little and use this little gently, you can produce useful results.

Look, if you knew the complete functioning of the human brain, it means that you would know the secrets of life and death, and those are secrets that are very heavy to carry.

Do you know why everybody has this mark under the nose? Fariduddin Attar explains it to us, and I am not arguing with Attar. The story is: before a baby is born, he knows all the secrets of life and death, and as soon as he is born an angel places its finger there.

Q : I have two questions. Agha, you have said that no therapy is complete, yet there are some therapies that do mention the word "cure". Nevertheless we do have problems with the persons when they finish them. My question is: when people finish a therapy like this, should we accept the idea of cure or should we insist that the patient go on working with what we have to give him?

A : It depends on the individual patient. If that individual patient is convinced he is cured, you tell him: "You are cured and I don't

want to see you again.” If however, there is a little doubt, again it depends on your knowledge about the patient, you can suggest that he continue with some directed reading that could be, depending on your decision, from the Tradition. But making that suggestion to the patient is a personal decision of the therapist.

Q : The other question is similar but it concerns people who are already in the Tradition. What does one do with them?

A : The answer is evident. They do the therapy and go on with their studies in the Tradition.

Q : If friends of the Tradition do ask for assistance in receiving another therapy after they have gone through the basic therapy, because they still have emotional conflicts, should the therapist indicate some continuation?

A : He should indicate the continuation of their work in the Tradition because, as a solution, I prefer the Tradition to any therapy. In the Tradition we already have everything. By this I mean that I don't think I would apply therapy to the group. But then, I am old-fashioned.

Q : One question concerning body-oriented therapy. I feel the Tradition does not give much importance to the body. What could you say about body therapy and bio-energetics? I work with these techniques.

A : The reason you don't find many works on body movement in the Tradition is because we are dealing with the generation and accumulation of energy, and since physical body work uses up energy, we tend to lessen the physical work.

Nevertheless there is nothing against the use of physical energy, be it as a treatment, be it in the form of posture or as a discipline of movement or dance.

People say it's possible to calculate the biorhythms of the body. I also think so, but I don't think it's very useful. I don't think it's bad or negative, and I don't think it's totally useless, but I don't think it is as important as some people say it is.

The body controls its own biorhythms. So what should be very

carefully taught to the client is to use physical energy in physical situations, and the more valuable energy in deeper activities. Because that deep energy you produce is too valuable to be used in dance, movement or other physical activities.

For example, some of us who are old-fashioned think the zikr should be done silently, because we are so miserable that we need to preserve the least little portion of energy, and we think that in pronouncing the word, we are perhaps using this portion of energy to energize the throat and vocal cords to emit a sound. So why should we not hold that energy in by pronouncing the word inside? I mean, the difference is minimal.

Q : I have a personal question. Concerning the specific locations on the body and chakras, as the yogis say. I would like to ask about the Lataif. It is said they are not physical locations but at the same time, we receive indications about where to concentrate on, using the body. Is this a subtle way of using localized energy? How does it work? I mean, if it isn't a physical location, what is it? And why do we have to concentrate on a physical part of the body?

A : This is because those areas on which we concentrate are areas of energy recollection, and the energy is stored in physical locations, about which we don't talk, for the following reasons:

First, it's not necessary, since that energy is collected in the recollection-center, and it is transmitted to one of the physical centers according to its quality, so that you do not need to know where they are.

Secondly, you don't have to know where they are because you would make a big case of it. Suppose it's the cornea of my left eye, for example, it would then become something important: "Oh, the cornea of my left eye!"; and people would paint it gold or something; perhaps even take it out. So just do it and shut up. Democracy.

Q : For me, the most mysterious things in psychology are the dreams. Can I consider some kinds of dreams as a contact with another dimension?

A : No. From the point of view of the brain, physical sleep is a time in which blocks of cells that were exhausted or damaged are

replaced, and of course, this also applies to physical activities which happen psychologically.

Q : You have sometimes said that some kinds of contemporary music can be dangerous. I would like to know what is the danger of such music. How can we distinguish between what is harmful and what is not?

A : Well, the simplest way is to hear it and observe oneself, and if you feel that tension is being created, it is probably dangerous. I'm not talking here about the kind of hits that make you stand up and dance, but only when you observe that there are small signs of tension.

In fact, the system generally identifies with or rejects the tone and the rhythm, and the general reaction is then one of hostility.

For instance, many of you here know that all of those sparkling strobe lights in discos are harmful: they spark according to the rhythm of the brain (68 cycles per second). It is equivalent to drinking a bottle of whisky: after a while, you feel smashed.

It's destructive; people know it and go on doing it. There is no control, no law forbidding it, and I think it's terrible.

Q : Many musicians are trying to create different kinds of music, but in my case, I have observed that I became used to a certain kind of music I listened to in my childhood, and when I listen to a different kind of music for the first time, the first reaction is to be astonished, and only afterwards do I get used to the new music.

I would like to know whether it usually happens or if it could be dangerous to the ear, particularly with the new kind of music after Stravinsky?

A : Yes. This really can be a destructive thing. When people are hit with more and more volume on the inner ear, which is delicate, it becomes dampened when they get older. There is nothing that can be done concerning it, but fortunately, the impact of the sound is monitored and filtered internally, and it's not allowed to arrive at the delicate areas where it could be destructive. So you listen, but do not be afraid of it.

This leads me to another point that I am sure those of you who

work in psychology and psychiatry come across. Very frequently, one of the bases of a neurosis is fear.

This fear is something very real for some persons. You can't tell them: "What are you afraid of? There is no reason"; because for them it's something real and concrete.

I have two stories about fear. One of them is an old story by Solomon Schwartz and the other is mine. He said: "Fear knocked at the door. Faith opened it, and didn't find anything."

On one of those sorts of nights, my children Amina and Arif were crying in their bedroom, and I asked them: "What is happening?"

"There is a wolf in the garden," they said, and to them, it was real.

So I told them: "All right, I don't like to have wolves in the garden, that's deplorable. Put on your dressing-gowns and I will take a flashlight and a gun, and we are going to go to the garden together and we will look under each bush and around each tree, and if the wolf is there, I will shoot."

I would say to Arif or Amina: "Is there any place we should look at?"; and they would say: "How about those trees, let's take a look".

We'd look, and there was no wolf. So I said "The wolf is gone"; and the result was twofold: firstly, we looked for the wolf for about ten minutes and, as a result, the children had eight hours of sleep. Secondly, they knew that if the wolf were there, or a bear, or any other horrible thing, Daddy would take care of the situation.

But this kind of fear can become something quite real, and has to be dealt with very carefully and lessened. It needs to be delicately diluted and not just ignored by saying "What do you mean, fear, there is no reason for fear. Let's go into your problems now."

Q : Do you mean we mustn't contradict what the person is saying? That we must not go against what he is saying?

A : This is true, yes. If it exists for them, we have to accept it, in different ways. Such as looking with a flashlight and showing

or convincing them that it doesn't exist.

A direct contradiction produces: "This person is not sympathetic; he doesn't understand me; how could he understand my problems if he doesn't understand this? If I'm afraid of crossing the street, I'll take a taxi."

You see, you can find a balance between first approving the person's fixation and then sabotaging it.

There is a very delicate way of doing it, and it is the only way it can be done: by means of observation and judgement of what you are doing, and seeing how it is working. If you are going too fast, slow down.

You see, if you establish a patient's picture, this picture must include the expressions produced by your client. If his pulse is beating normally, then it's all right and you come back to it. If the look is expressing something, or the mouth something else; all of these things are signals that you observe, and according to them, you go on, stop, or return to it later.

Q : Could you say something about essence?

A : Yes, I could talk a lot about essence, but your question is very wide.

Q : Some indications of how we can know when we are working with essence or with personality? I recognize that I have asked a very vague question. Three directions, please.

A : All right, three directions.

To begin with, basically, you are using the essence each time you are using any technique or any context of the Tradition. This is in the first place.

Secondly, you are working with the essence, if, before beginning anything, you invoke what we call a "Nyat" or intention. It means 10 or 15 minutes of zikr. If you concentrate yourself on receiving the help

help of the Tradition, then you will be using the essence.

The third and most difficult part is when you are treating someone or doing something and suddenly you have no idea of what to do. And then, without you really knowing it, it comes to you. That is the essence working. That's the third. Then there's the fourth, the fifth and the sixth, but let's wait until next year.

Q : This kind of thing has happened with me, since I have come into the Tradition. Suddenly things come to me, and often I tell things I never realized I knew, and that actually could help people.

A : That's because you read something, because you have gone somewhere, because you bought a tasbeeh, a rug, or an object of the Tradition, and at the moment you really need it, the energy of this thing comes to you.

Someone might say: "I read something and I don't understand it." That's all right, you don't understand it now, but when you have the necessity of understanding it, you will. It's like an investment.

Q : Agha, could the exercising of Rule number 9 (Ukufi Zamani, the time halt) be a way of getting closer to the essence? Of getting to know it in another way?

A : No, you only feel the presence of the essence and its deeper effect when you receive a feedback from the surface, an echo which says that the essence is working. But it's a very light echo, a very soft one.

The reason for all this is fairly obvious: you use the essence in deep centers of the body by charging and making use of that essence. If you bring that concentration of essence to the surface, to the level of your conscious mind, it will explode in the top of your head.

Q : Does the essence work in an unconscious way?

A : Yes.

Q : During my work, I feel my connection with the Tradition. Sometimes it is very present, but other times it is not present and the work becomes confused. How could I stabilize that connection, neither too much nor too little?

A : Take an interval of five minutes and bring the connection back.

And now, with your permission, I need to see my psychologist.