

AUTOBIOGRPHY by DORA MARIA KALFF

I was born on December 12, 1904 in Richterwil on Zurichsee the third child of A. and L. Gattiger-Sauter. My father was in a textile wholesale business and had worldwide contacts. Mother ran our big household and was a frequent hostess to our numerous friends

I slept through the third grade of the Secondary school in our village, which was followed by a Gymnasium (High school) with Greek and Latin in Fetan (Engadin). After graduation I passed the entrance exams to the Westfield College in London where I selected subjects with emphasis on phylosophy. My interest in the Oriental thought was awakened early in life and I immersed myself in the studies of Laotse and Kungfutse. My early training in Greek and Latin stood me good stead in this pursuit. All through this period of time, even during my high school years, my interest in music had not diminished and I spent a great deal of time studying the piano. Thus, guided by my innermost longigns, I dropped out of college and went to Paris to study the piano with Robert Casadesus and stayed there for several years.

At the age of twenty-nine I married a banker L.E.A. Kalff in the Netherlands who earlier had spent several years in Indonesia and shared my interest in Oriental philosophy and art. War years followed and I returned home with my two sons. For the next five years we lived in a small mountain village where I met the Jung family. This led to my interest in Jung's work and a decision to study his psychology. During the next five years I studied at the C.G. Jung Institute and graduated in my analysis with Mrs. Emma Jung and partly with participation of Prof. Jung himself. The Childrens' Analysis Center in Zurich was not yet opened.

In the meantime, Jung and his wife arrived at a conclusion that I might work well with children. Their belief was based on the data revealed in my analysis. Jung also maintained that a therapist working with children should also have worked with adults for adults bring the child to a therapist. This challenge led me back to England for further studies. In the past during my stay in London, I had worked at various clinics with prominent therapists. Among them Dr. Michal Fordham (a Jungian child analyst), Dr. Winnicott who was at the time at Tavistock clinic and Dr. Margaret Loewenfeld at the Child Guidance Clinic. In her clinic I became familiar with the "Welttest" which was used primarily for diagnostic purposes. (Performance in the sand box with freely selected figuerins.) I soon realized that the pictures thus created were dream-like and that the children ought to be encouraged to play regularly.

Upon my return to Switzerland by the end of 1956, I opened my own practice in Zollicon. I now had proof of my theories: series of images created in the play in the sand box were based on symbols which ran parallel to the Jungian individualization processes. This enabled a deeper penetration of the layers of the still subconscious experience which I regarded as the primary Self. This proved to be the "turning point" in the therapy and made it possible to convert negative energies into positive and constructive ones thus enabling the building of a new personality. Dr. Loewenfeld and I were in complete agreement on this subject and decided to call it "the sand play therapy."

In 1959 I was invited for the first time to the U.S. to share my theories. It was my first visit to San Fraancisco. Later on other invitations followed - the Northwestern University and Loyola in Chicago, and Bruno Bettelheim showed great interest in my work. In Detroit the Merril-Palmer Institute of Human Development and Family Life wanted to hear me. I also had an invitation to Berkeley, Los Angeles and Santa Cruz in California and finally the Harward Medical School and the Eric

Ericson Center also at Harward. I was also invited to speak at the C.G. Jung Institutes in Los Angeles, San Francisco and New York.

By that time it became clear to me that this therapy could be applied not only to children and their neuroses but also to adults so long as the therapist succeeds in providing the patient with the space which can be considered "free and protected." This method could be used not only with patients suffering from neurosis but also in cases of psychosomatic ailments as well. I became a member on the staff of the Bircher Benner Clinic in Zurich.

In 1966 I was invited for the first time to Japan in order to introduce there the "sand play" method. After several subsequent visits and with the support of Professor Dr. Kawai, Dean of University of Kyoto, the sand play therapy became quite popular in Japan.

In 1985 the "International Society for Sand Play Therapy" was founded with membership in Switzerland, Germany, Italy, the U.S and Japan.

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