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I should like to take this opportunity, both personally and on behalf of all the Sufism and Psychology group members, both past and present, to thank Fleur for the great work, she and the other members of her team put in, to get this special interest group off the ground and running.

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Let us begin with a story:

### **In the Beginning...**

“Once upon a time...a hunter of the first people went to a place of reeds and flowers and birds singing by deep water. He knelt down to fill his calabash with drinking water, and as he did so was startled to see, in the still glass of the shining surface before him, the reflection of an enormous white bird that he had never seen before. Astonished, he looked up, but the bird had already vanished over the black tops of a dense forest – ‘the forest of the night’. From that moment his heart was filled with a restless longing to capture the bird.

Leaving his cattle, his wife, his children and his people, he went deep into the forest looking for the bird, and out into the great world beyond. Yet everywhere he found nothing but rumour of the bird. At last, when he was a very old man and near his end, he was told that he would find the bird on a great white mountain in the heart of Africa, far north of his own home. He found the mountain and started climbing it. He climbed for days until, one nightfall, he found himself on the edge of the white cap of the mountain. And still there was no sign of the bird. He realised his end was near. Feeling he had failed, he threw himself down like a little child, crying: ‘Oh! My mother! Oh!’ Then a voice answered him and said: ‘Look! Oh! Look!’ He looked up and saw, in the red sky of a dying African day, a white feather falling slowly down towards him. He held out his hand and grasped it. With the feather in his hand, he died content as night fell.

‘But what sort of bird was it, old father?’, we asked the shepherd. We often asked it; but always he would shake his head and say: ‘I do not know its name; no-one knows its name. It was a great white bird, and one feather of it in the hand of a man was enough; one feather of it on the head of a chief brought happiness to all his people.’...”

(from a story told to Laurens Van de Post in childhood by an old Hottentot servant; from his book: *The Heart of the Hunter*, Hogarth Press, 1961, pp199-200)

### **The Lost Word**

The fourth gospel of John the Evangelist (KJV) begins thus:

“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God...

In Freemasonry we hear the echoes of a ‘lost word’:

The True Word of a Mason is to be found in the concealed and profound meaning of the Ineffable Name of Deity, communicated by God to Moses; and *which meaning was long lost by the very precautions taken to conceal it*. The true pronunciation of that name was in truth a secret, in which, however, was involved the far more profound secret of its meaning. In that meaning is included all the truth that can be known by us, in regard to the nature of God.

**Albert Pike**, *Morals and Dogma*

The irony of this loss resulting from the ‘hiding’ of that which was ultimately precious tells us a great deal about the nature of ‘the journey of return’.

Islam and Sufism tells us that God hides - from those that are *as yet* unworthy - *secrets* that only the true lovers of God may reach. These *secrets* are as if veiled from the eyes of those passersby unwilling or unable to submit themselves to the Will of God.

Another Mason, **Arthur Edward Waite**, says:

‘The theory of mysticism is that the voice of God is within, and that the soul has to enter into the realisation that God is within. The question is whether that realisation can be fully achieved in this life. All, or nearly all, the great mystics, held that they only approximated it. The absolute vision and union lie very far away—so *the quest of the Lost Word goes on, ever on.*’

The great early 20<sup>th</sup> century Indian Sufi, Hazrat Inayat Khan, founder of the International Sufi Movement, said that ‘...the idea [of the Lost Word] belongs to the *inner cult* of all ages, and *in the secret teaching there is this teaching about the word that was lost*. Very few, at present know, or at least seem to know, the meaning of it...’

‘...you may ask, [Hazrat Inayat Khan says], “What has man lost?” And the answer is God Himself. That perfect intelligence that is in every being, that intelligence that the Vedanta calls “Light.” The verses of the Qur’an say, “God is light, Nur,” which means that the light of God is immanent in the world of names and forms, in all that exists in this world of variety...And *man in this life of illusion has yet the same intelligence, which he can realise in its perfection in that state of consciousness where he can be aware of his own perfection*. The religions, the mystics, the philosophers of all ages give the key to the secret...the yearning of every soul is for the realisation of that perfection that is the longing consciously or unconsciously of everything, of every being in this world. There is [this] one thing in the whole creation which is like an alarm clock, set for a certain time to make a sound so that one will awaken. That clock sounds through the activity of evolution, and when it is touched, man is wakened by the alarm. *That was the word that was lost, and it has its echo in the*

*longing.*' ('The Word That Was Lost', Hazrat Inayat Khan, The Supplementary Papers [unpublished], Class for Murids 7).

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It is, however, one thing to know intellectually the answer, quite another to know it as something, *the* thing, that is the very *substance* of our lives. The question; the 'what' of this, although outlined here, still leaves us with the *how*. *How does one so act* that this understanding becomes *flesh and blood* for us, that God becomes *imminent* in our everyday lives? *What* must we *do* in order to awaken to this state of being? Van der Post showed us what it *might* mean to catch just a glimpse of this in the (mythic) life story of the hunter of the first peoples, where "...*one feather of [the great white bird] in the hand of a man was enough; one feather of it on the head of a chief brought happiness to all his people...*"

Inayat Khan points to the same challenge. Sufi's call this 'the cry of the heart', and it is to *this cry* that humanity must - once it hears the call - find an answer that satisfies it or go on searching for the rest of their lives.

Sufis, according to Idries Shah (The Sufis, Chapter: The Secret language; The Builders, p207) speak of the ninety-nine divine names or attributes [of God] '... The hundredth name [he says] is a *secret*, known only to the Seeker when he has become imbued with the spirit of the others.'

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We, also, in our role as psychologists, as healers of the psyches of others, *once we are able to hear and respond to this call* ourselves, can use this same understanding, this knowledge, in such a way as to be able to point our clients (where they show such an inclination), towards this other form of 'wholeness,' to the 'reflection of this great white bird' in the water.

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It should be clear to those that care about such things that a 'psychology' as practiced by many of our fellow professionals must allow that its understanding of what constitutes psychological 'health' is inadequate without the addition of something more. In a way which is deeply important to humanity, Sufism shows us that - what we take for psychic health - is in fact a kind of sickness, divorced as it is from this deeper reality, and is therefore barely adequate as a starting point for a new journeying into the kinds of questions alluded to above, and without the answer to which, we can never really know the peace of psychic *wholeness*.

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Although one may get a rough conceptual understanding from the fragments outlined above (as to what is missing), what is needed next is some kind of entry point: a map of sorts to get to first base as it were. Knowing something of *where* we are currently situated helps us to find the spot to proceed from (somewhat like those helpful civic maps posted on information boards as one enters a new town with a red arrow pointing to a spot marked, "You are here"!).

The focus I am about to suggest is naturally only one way to approach this problem, but it has the added benefit that once one has developed a certain familiarity with it, it can become a useful adjunct to working with clients.

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### **Future Direction**

My intention, over the coming weeks and months, is - insha'allah - to outline a structure for such a beginning point for self-understanding. Initially I will be using a readily available 'typology' of personality that I believe may be useful to this end . That it is not a fully 'evidence based' system only tells us that such a grand scheme of bringing together all the bits of knowledge run through the mill of scientific research doesn't cast anything like a wide enough net to capture that experience of 'Being' that we need to address here. Some of you may be aware of – even familiar with - this 'typology'. If so please bear with me, perhaps there may be something new in the approach, none-the-less. Others may already use this or other typologies in their day-to-day interactions with clients. Hopefully it will be clear that any such schemas are not *in themselves* the gateway to understanding this 'missing thing' spoken of above, but – like the moon reflected in clear mountain lakes or dirty pond water is still yet the reflection of something more substantial - so too do typologies refer us to a yet deeper *existent*, an underlying *patterning* which is approximate enough to turn the heart towards the Real, for truly it is said: *naught exists save the Face of God*.

2:115 (**Asad**) And God's is the east and the west: and wherever you turn, there is God's countenance. Behold, God is infinite, all-knowing.

The task we have set before us then, is no less than to outline *a bridge* that will lead from such a 'reflection', no matter how vague its outline be, to something more akin to *a gateway*.

May Allah grant us success.

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