



Everything is perfect

- Introducing Sufi psychology

By Dr Mustafa Merter

Edited with John Higgins

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The leaf cannot move without the winds blowing
(Mawlana Rumi (ks) in Mathnawi)

We dedicate this humble book to Mustafa's Sheikh, his Spiritual Guide (Mursheed)

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... A Fragment of a story

It was one of those hot days of early summer, hot without the heavy dust that builds towards the end of the season, and I went to the central mosque of Bodrum for Friday prayers. During the sermon my attention was caught by the majestic old man shown on the cover of this book, sitting away from me in another row. I felt hypnotised and stared at him with very strange feelings in my heart.

I was poised to move towards him when prayers were over, but was interrupted by the husband of one of my patients, who asked me about the medication I'd prescribed for his wife and this compelling man, who I now know as Osman Effendi, was lost in the crowd.

With a heavy heart at such a lost opportunity, I decided to buy some coffee in a store that lay down a flight of steps, away from the main thoroughfare. When I'd finished making my purchase, still ruminating on the sadness of this lost opportunity, I put my foot on the first step of the flight that would take me back to the main concourse. The steps were narrow and impossible for more than one person to pass up or down at a time, and as I looked up I could see that someone was standing at the top of them, blocking the way. It was with a sense of stupefaction I saw it was the majestic old man, Osman Effendi, who stood there smiling at me.

From that day on we shared a deep friendship, attending prayers and also spending moments of great meaning together in the small Sufi bookstore in one of Bodrum's backstreets. After a while I began to direct my most difficult patients towards Him. He would accept them into His modest one room house and with his incredible radiance "cure" them, certainly more than I did. He warmed with His holy hands some milk in the small kitchen and then said with His soft voice and special Bodrum accent: "Drink this my son, my daughter".

After this treatment His newly found son or daughter would leave His house, as if transformed. One of His typical sayings, which he used at all times, was: "Everything is perfect". This was not something fanciful, He pronounced this statement with such a deep conviction and radiance that whatever the situation you might find yourself in it worked its magic and the world became, for that moment, perfect.

Chapter 1 – The dream of the dead baby

This is a personal story and it took John a long time to find a way to engage with it. I have for many years been documenting my dreams and by now have over a thousand; this dream is one that still comes to the fore most readily for me. Because of a hereditary predisposition, a tragic childhood and of course personal faults, I have suffered all my life from periodic depression, anxiety and an obsessive compulsive tendency. It is hard to bear such a weight, especially as a psychiatrist and would be dervish. What a paradox! So during one of these depressive periods, my wife looked in my sad eyes and told me: "Well Mustafa, I think it is time for you to travel".

I am grateful to her for her comprehension and support. My way brought me to the Green Gulch meditation center near Muir woods, just outside San Francisco, founded by the late Zen Teacher, Shunryu Suzuki. There I started a private retreat, besides the two thousand year old redwoods. I think it was on the third or fourth day of my retreat that I had the following dream.

Walking in an unknown city, I came near a mosque. On a marble platform where usually the funeral corpse is placed during the prayer, there was a dead baby lying there, about one year old. I approached and admired the beauty but also was very sad about the death stains on the body. Suddenly, like a wonder the baby opened his eyes, I was shocked and exhilarated. After some hesitation I took the baby in my arms and ran to a nearby hospital where his mother should be...

Immediately after this dream my depression became less consuming, my heart opened again and the world became colorful. This was a dream that brought me back to life and was a gift from my upper twin, thanks to my Lord. It changed my state so that when I awoke the change had happened. This was an example of the power of the dream to work a change in someone without their active involvement. I didn't need to interpret it to find meaning; the meaning came in the form of the change that I woke to find in myself. The dream took me out of the death that I had sucked myself into, with the years of living in the underground sea of the lower unconscious, and put me in touch with the vibrant and living feminine that would suckle me back to health.

Chapter 2 - The distinctive, undiluted insights of the Sufi tradition

1. There are four insights that we suggest anchor the Sufi tradition. Firstly there is a distinctive insight into the nature of the human psyche, or nafs as Sufis talk of it, which is understood to have a bi-polar structure composed of different levels, like a building of infinite floors. The lower parts are obscure, frightful, chaotic, evil and there rules the greatest despair. The higher parts are filled with divine love where the greatest hope, trust and contentment reign.
2. The second insight is that through this bi-polar psychic structure people can grow, deepen and refine their connection with others and all creation. Thirdly every un-experienced level, both above and below our present level, is unconscious. The lower parts correspond to the unconscious as known by the western psychology, but the higher parts, the higher unconscious, are unknown to western psychology and it is in these parts that human Saintliness is experienced. Lastly, in the Sufi tradition, the world is filled with the perfection of God's spirit

We will briefly expand on each of these founding insights in the paragraphs below.

... The First Distinctive and Undiluted Insight. The human psyche (nafs) has a bi-polar structure composed of different levels, like a building of infinite floors. The lower parts are obscure, frightful, chaotic, evil and there reigns the greatest despair. The higher parts are filled with divine love where the greatest hope, trust and contentment reign. The following verses speak to the height and depth of experience that has the potential to be known within us:

*[even thus, O men,] are you bound to move; onward from stage to stage
The Eighty-Fourth Surah Al-Inshiqaq (The Splitting Asunder) 84/19*

*"You are not a single "you", oh good comrade, no you are the sky and the deep sea.
Your mighty "you" is nine hundredfold¹, is the ocean and the drowning place of
hundred "you"s...*

Mevlana Rumi, Mathnawi, Nicholson Band III 1302-3

¹ Please note that the number 900 in this verse has a metaphorical and not a literal meaning, in reality, as mentioned before, the "ascending" capacity of every human being is infinite.

We live our lives between God's light, one of God's beautiful names being en-Nûr, which translates into the sense of divine light, and almost infinite darkness. The first creational act is perfect (Surah Tin 95/2), in other words we are born into perfection, but then we descend down away from this perfection by divine will to a basic existential level, which is the level of the commanding self or nafs-e ammarah. This is our starting point and can be seen as the base from which we can begin our ascent, the first step of an infinite staircase where human ascending and potential has no limits.

But at this first critical level, there is also a danger of falling into a deep abyss if divine laws are not respected. Two opposite influences are acting on us at this level, the lower unconscious' whisperings of evil and the higher unconscious' inspirations towards a divine nature. This sense of being lured by the whisperings of evil is well described by Homer when he tells of Odysseus on his travels back to Ithaca, facing the perils and lures of the Sirens – which he knows can only be resisted with the help of others.

Yet even in the darkest levels of the abyss, the divine light still reaches mankind, we are all splashed with light. All we have to do is turn around and we will see this light... and this is what brings the most wonderful hope to our lives. Everywhere there is light, if only we let ourselves see it.

Imagine during our Odyssey, tempted as we are by the Sirens that we fell into the darkest levels of existence. Our Lord whose mercy and grace surpasses his wrath whispers to us from our heart and God's whisper is always with us if we can bear to hear it:

*"[Thus speaks God:57] "O you servants of Mine who have transgressed against your own selves! Despair not of God's mercy: behold, God forgives all sins - for, verily, He alone is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace!"
The Thirty-Ninth Surah Az-Zumar (The Throngs) M.Asad39/53*

All we have to do is turn around and step into repentance or tawba; repentance is always available to us and by that simple act so we will see this light and its hope, known as *önceden verdik*

'Consider the heavens and that which comes in the night! (2) And what could make thee conceive what it is that comes in the night? (3) It is the star that pierces through [life's] darkness: (4) [for] no human being has ever been left unguarded.'

In the Qur'anic mode of expression, at-tariq is evidently a metaphor for the heavenly solace which sometimes comes to a human being lost in the deepest darkness of affliction and distress; or for the sudden, intuitive enlightenment which disperses the darkness of uncertainty.

... **The Second Distinctive and Undiluted Insight.** Through this bi-polar psychic structure people can grow, deepen and refine their connection with others and all creation.

This structure between absolute light and almost infinite darkness has different levels – and man exists in these different levels ... and some of these levels are *stations*, which are established and stable existential platforms. As we live and develop we move between these *stations*, as if we were on a staircase, filled with dynamic *states*.

At the lower levels, these states are not subtle and are best described as simple feelings, and reflect our superficial engagement with the people and objects we engage with, but as we move onto a higher level our senses and sensations have a deeper penetration. We develop our capacity to witness, and feel with our hearts, our connection with the other. As we refine and deepen our capacity to be moved, so the feeling of love evolves into a subtle state of compassion that becomes all encompassing, infinite and unbounded. The melody of our life evolves as we develop, the false notes of our negative feelings are left behind, and the music of our life becomes more perfect.

This compassion comes from the deep insight that in reality we live in a dynamic world where everything shines and pulsates with a harmonious rhythm. All creation is made up of the different sounds of the divine oratorio and to experience this wisdom and please allow yourself to have an audition with this divine oratorio. Put your hand on your heart and listen with the ears of a shy bird to the Bolero of Ravel, conducted by Daniel Barenboim with the Berlin Philharmonic. Experience this state for yourself, but without commentary. As the late Murshid of Cerrahi Order, Safer Dal (ks) wrote in his book, "I have learned from my Sheikh to pray with love, and to treat all creation with compassion"

... **The Third Distinctive and Undiluted Insight.** Every un-experienced level, both above and below our present level, is unconscious. The lower parts correspond to the unconscious as known by the western psychology, but the higher parts, the

higher unconscious, are unknown to western psychology and it is in these parts that human Saintliness is experienced.

Our consciousness is like an island surrounded by an ocean. When we go to the shore we look down into the sea and we make contact with our depths of anxiety and despair. The sea is filled with dark chasms and all sorts of creatures, many of which we know as monsters of the deep – and the deeper we go, the more they become dangerous and invested with negative symbols. Our culture has become fixated with these negative symbols and sometimes we find we cannot take our eyes, or our hearts, off them. We come to believe that the only truth lies in understanding the horrors that lie below us, leading us to dedicate our lives to building up our defenses so they won't overwhelm us. Life takes on a frightened, shrunken and defensive quality.

This island of our consciousness can also be seen to have a hill, a high place at its centre. When we stand on the hill, we can look upwards to the sky, towards the stars in their uncountable millions and the galaxies spiraling away forever, and this is the higher unconscious. As we look into the sky we are in contact with this infinite universe in which we are less than a part. It is through this knowledge of the higher unconscious that we know man as living between two poles, existing in a world framed by both lower and higher unconsciousness. The lower unconscious lets us know our demons, while the higher lets us know the Saintliness of the human experience and its connection to the divine infinite.

The higher unconsciousness is the greater force, always present in the sublime heights, which is not where much of our civilization has taken us – preferring instead to attribute the dominant force to the demons and frightened fantasies of the lower unconscious. The following verses speak to our need to embrace both aspects of our experience, the higher and the lower, so we can stretch our wings and fly:

*So that you may have two wings (fear and hope); for the bird
that has (only) one wing is unable to fly, O excellent (reader). 1554*

*And mount step by step above the moon and the sun, lest he
remain like the door-ring fastened on the door;
And, like the Friend, pass beyond the Seventh Heaven,
saying, "I love not them that set." 1558*

... The Fourth Distinctive and Undiluted Insight. The world is filled with the perfection of God's spirit

In every encounter with the world you have the possibility to be moved by God, to know that everything can be perfect, even as the flesh fails and consumes itself. The world is filled with perfection if we let ourselves know it. The gate is always available to be opened, for us to pass through and be filled with the knowledge and experience of perfection.

But to pass through the gate requires us to let go of many ways through which we have become accustomed to knowing the world. To encounter the perfection of God requires us to let go of the fantasies of ego, self and narcissism and surrender ourselves to an unknowable path of development, a path that will present itself when the time is right and our hearts are open. There will be a time to die along the way as much as there will be a time to be born and grow.

Chapter 3 - The experience of living in a world defined by higher and lower unconscious

As human beings we live between the tension of the depths of the lower unconscious and the perfect light of the higher unconscious. The way we live with this tension depends on where we are starting from, whether we are still living with superficial sensation or whether we have begun to develop those subtle states that allow us to know the world with greater attention and heart.

At the level of the commanding *nafs* we are governed by the superficial life of sensation, where we have three ways of being in the world, regulated by the universal divine laws. These laws are found in all the major religious traditions and can be seen to be built around the insight that the good life requires a person not to harm others (*huquq-u ibad*), nor to harm him/herself (*huquq-u nafs*), nor to harm divine laws (*huquq-ullah*). These instructions can be summarized as a wise request not to pollute the psychic ecology of the universe. What we do with ourselves and with others does not happen apart from the wider psychic world; we are part of this greater world, not apart from it.

The three ways of being, within this overarching ecological context, show that human beings can live in one of three ways. We can either:

- Maintain our position, in terms of where we are positioned on the continuum between the higher and lower unconscious OR
- Fall to a lower level, stepping down into the world of the lower unconscious and focusing on the monsters of the deep sea that surrounds us OR
- Ascend to a higher level, seeking to move towards the perfection of the higher unconscious

... What If we maintain our position?

One of the principle laws of the *nafs* structure is that if we do no more than stay as we are then we will become compressed. For a while we won't feel the pain of this restriction, but after a while this existential space will become too tight for us and we will experience increasing existential anxiety, for which we will be unable to see any reason – an anxiety which the following speaks to:

NAY! I call to witness this land in which thou art free to dwell - and (call to witness) parent and offspring:-Verily, We have created man into [a life of] pain, toil and trial²
The Ninetieth Surah Al-Balad (The Land) 90/1-4

Throughout history we can see this aspiration for ascending in all humanity. All the tower symbolism represents this very human longing. The story of the tower of Babel and the construction of the pyramids are among the earliest symbols of this desire for ascension and can also be seen in mythological labors imposed by Aphrodite on Psyche in the underworld as he aspires to ascend³.

Philosophers throughout the ages have been fascinated with this notion of ascension and have experienced deep frustration when it has failed them. How else can we explain Camus' "absurdity", Schopenhauer's "embittering" or Kierkegaard's abortive "leap of faith"? The magic answer to all these unanswered questions would be not to know, but to experience this third dimension of the psyche. Whatever we accomplish on a fixed existential level, in terms of knowledge or material wealth becomes after a while deadly boring. The tragic statement of Kierkegaard, of "the sickness unto death", fills our hearts with deep sorrow.

... What if we fall to a lower level?

When we fall, then we have anxiety and unease, even disease. Existential stagnation by itself is a disease but when we fall into the deeper levels of nafs, anxiety and unease increase and life becomes unsupportable. The human heart is like a satellite dish that receives signs constantly from the upper unconscious; an upper unconscious that is always transmitting, whether or not our lower unconscious self is able to make explicit sense of the messages being sent.

The most dramatic consequence of falling to a lower level is that this dish no longer receives the signs so clearly. Our connection with eternity, with God, is disrupted. We might not have been able to interpret the messages we were being sent before, but

² In the view of Muhammad Asad: "The term kabad, comprising the concepts of "pain", "distress", "hardship", "toil", "trial", etc and can be rendered only by a compound expression like the one above". But we also find in the Quran interpretation of I. Hakkı Bursevi another explanation for this word: **Kabad** is the state of something, when it doesn't fit to the space it has belonged in and becomes compressed.

³ As written about by Anthony Stevens in Ariadne's Clue.

we were aware of the clear presence of something other and hopeful – and we feel that loss of hope and that sense of isolation most keenly.

We shall bring them low, step by step, without their perceiving how it has come about: (68:45) for, behold, though I may give them rein for a while, My subtle scheme is exceedingly firm! (68:46)

The Sixty-Eighth Surah Al-Qalam (The Pen)

AND [remember] him of the great fish - when he went off in wrath, thinking that We had no power over him! But then he cried out in the deep darkness [of his distress]: "There is no deity save Thee! Limitless art Thou in Thy glory! Verily, I have done wrong!" The Twenty-First Surah Al-Anbiya (The Prophets) 21:87

(6:36) Only they who listen [with their hearts] can respond to a call; and as for the dead [of heart], God [alone] can raise them from the dead, whereupon unto Him they shall return

The Sixth Surah Al-An'am (Cattle) (6:36)

22:46 Have they, then, never journeyed about the earth, letting their hearts gain wisdom, and causing their ears to hear? Yet, verily, it is not their eyes that have become blind - but blind have become the hearts that are in their breasts!

The Twenty-Second Surah Al-Hajj (The Pilgrimage) 22:46

These verses speak to us of the heartfelt dislocation that envelops us when we find ourselves sinking into the world of the lower unconscious.

... What If we ascend?

When we ascend along the axis mundi of the higher unconscious (sirat-i mustaqim), our senses and sensations become clearer and less distorted by the habits of ego and unexamined superficial feelings. The meaning of our dreams, and the other messages from our upper unconscious, also become more evident and we start to feel through our heart the subtle states and shifts in the quality of how we know the world. We refine our relationships with others; change what we understand by relationship as we feel the world as a whole in which we are immersed, without separate identity. We embrace the transcendental and Godly dimension of being. We are becoming the two headed being – acting and knowing our acting from a higher place.

Through repeating this ascending action we start to see what's happening from another dimension. We see ourselves as actors on the stage, but we are not in the body of the actor, we are sitting in the Balcony of the Theatre of existence. This second level on the nafs structure is called "nafs al lawwame" and we become aware of it through our own internal, pre-gifted knowing:

But nay! I call to witness the accusing voice of man's own conscience!

The Seventy-Fifth Surah Al-Qiyamah(Resurrection) 75/2

As we sit with our second head in this existential Balcony, we may find we dislike and doubt what is going on with the self we see at the lower level on the stage. In time we may find we choose to stay on the Balcony and spend less and less of our time on the stage – our centre of psychic energy shifts from the lower to the higher position. This is the beginning of a process where there are other Balconies, other *nafs* levels, which allow each level to see what is going on in the level below it, but not in a way where suddenly all the Balconies know each other at once.

After a certain while, if you know in this way and the ascending continues, the signs become clearer and clearer and we have a new orientation in our existence. This new orientation changes our engagement with harmony, aesthetics and our capacity to engage with others and the world. Now we are infused with the spirit of compassion and loving kindness, love becomes at the heart of how we know ourselves, know others and speak with ourselves and with the world around us.

We also begin to know the creative silence of the mind and can find ourselves emptying the noise of mental striving within us, letting go of imposing what we think we know onto the world around us. Without the clamor of the knowing ego, so the relations we have with others, the world and the eternal becomes more harmonious and more suited to our creational perfection and holiness. We discover ourselves as we discover we are not bound to our ego and the need for a separate identity.

Chapter 4 – The origins and spirit of the Sufi tradition

At the very core of Sufi tradition is the special teaching that the Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) gave to a small group of his selected followers, known as the ashab-i suffa. Their number varied during the lifetime of the Prophet but is estimated to have been consistently, according to El Luma, around 300. A special place was reserved for them in the mosque of Medina (mascid-i nabi), where they were instructed in the Islamic sciences of Islamic law, the reciting of the Quran and the study of the sayings of the Prophet. At the same time as engaging with this scholarship, they spent their time in deep reflexion, known as tafakkur.

The Prophet also prescribed to them the dhikr, the act of remembrance of God, which involved them repeating some of the names of God in prescribed numbers. The teaching through the names originates with God Himself and in one sense Allah (cc) is the first Murshid.

‘And He imparted unto Adam the names of all things; then He brought them within the ken of the angels and said: "Declare unto Me the names of these [things], if what you say is true.”

Bakara 2/31

In time, once they had been sufficiently instructed, these selected followers were then sent out into the wider world to different centers, where they would act as instructors to others. The development of this distinctive, systematic and institutionalized teaching tradition (tariqa), in the form of associated schools, can be traced to around the 8th century.

... The Sufi tradition is a religious tradition

As the Sufi tradition has spread, so it has been at risk of dilution and its basic tenets and principles put at risk, which is why we feel the need for this book, and why we have woven in the teachings of the Prophet and the teachings of those inspired by him. The following two ayahs⁴ have been interpreted by Ashab-i Suffa (I. Hakki Bursevi, Ruhul Beyan) and speak to the Godly instruction woven into the very heart of the Sufi tradition:

⁴ The signs of God (“ayah” has a deeper meaning than divine verse as cited in the Holy Quran)

'[And give] unto [such of] the needy who, being wholly wrapped up in God's cause, are unable to go about the earth [in search of livelihood].[261] He who is unaware [of their condition] might think that they are wealthy, because they abstain [from begging]; [but] thou canst recognize them by their special mark: they do not beg of men with importunity. And whatever good you may spend [on them], verily, God knows it all.
(Bakara 2/273)

Hence, repulse not [any of] those who at morn and evening invoke their Sustainer, seeking His countenance. Thou art in no wise accountable for them - just as they are in no wise accountable for thee - and thou hast therefore no right to repulse them: for then thou wouldst be among the evildoers
(En'am 6/52)

It feels important to spell this out, as the temptation can be to deny this rooting in Islam and instead present it as something without an explicit religious lineage, that anyone can pick up and draw on as they see fit. The lineage from the Prophet to the actual living Murshid can be imagined as a succession of lenses, through which the wisdom reaches the disciple. If even one lens is defective or missing, the transmission lacks purity and brings more harm than good.

The Sufi tradition is a spiritual tradition, it is about a way of engaging with the divine; it is not something that can live with any integrity when it is cut off from this reality.

... The spirit of the Sufi tradition

Poetry is at the heart of the Sufi way of knowing the world and we offer up the following for you to reflect on. In it Rumi explores the distress of inhabiting the obvious world and the relief of stepping out from its constraints:

3545. (This world is) like a bathroom which is very hot, (so that) you are distressed and your soul is melted (with anguish).

Although the bathroom is broad and long, your soul is distressed and fatigued by the heat.

Your heart does not expand (you feel no relief) till you come out: what advantage, then, is the spaciousness of the room to you?

*Or (it is) as though you should put on tight shoes, O
misguided one, and go into a wide desert.
The spaciousness of the desert becomes narrow (distressing);
that desert and plain becomes a prison to you.
3490. The reflexion of every image shines unto everlasting
from the heart alone, both with plurality and without.
Unto everlasting every new image that falls on it (the heart) is
appearing therein without any imperfection.
They that burnish (their hearts) have escaped from (mere)
scent and color: they behold Beauty at every moment
without tarrying.*

Chapter 5 - Osman Effendi's gift

In my first meeting with John I found myself compelled to tell the story of Osman Effendi, whose picture is shown on the front cover of this book. To me, when I see his eyes, I see serenity, a quality of being that drew me to him from the first time I saw him. Our first meeting was in a Mosque, we were both attending Friday prayers and as they came to the end my attention was gripped. I knew in the moment that I had to give him a gift, but people were already leaving as this certainty struck me and I became separated from him. I could just make him out from his headgear bobbing through the crowd and was able to follow him, but even then I kept losing him from sight for tens of seconds at a time, and I'd think my chance had gone, and then I'd see him again... further away.

Let me expand on this slightly boiled down and functional description that John first suggested to me. There are details to what was seen and how my heart was called that speak to something that is distinctive to the lived experience of the Sufi way. My encounter with this strange old man, who I now give the title effendi as a mark of respect, in the small Turkish town of Bodrum is one the highlights of my life – a story to be savored, not rushed. My meeting with him speaks to a world where it is so easy to miss the jewels within unless one is open to seeing and looking with the heart.

It was one of those hot days of early summer, hot without the heavy dust that builds towards the end of the season, and I went to the central mosque of Bodrum to attend Friday prayer. During the sermon my attention was caught by this majestic old man, who was sitting away from me in another row. I felt as if I was hypnotized and stared at him with very strange feelings in my heart. I could not even see his face but all of his being and attitude was unusual, imposing. His modest clothing also drew my attention and I decided to give him a small gift after the prayer, something that is part of the Sufi way. I was poised to move towards him when the prayer was over, but was interrupted by the husband of one of my patients, who asked me some questions about the medication I had prescribed to his wife and this majestic old man, who I now know to be Osman Effendi, was lost in the crowd. But there was such a compelling desire in my heart to see and talk to Him that I rushed through the crowd to find Him, which is absolutely not my normal way of behaving. My normal way of walking in a leisurely manner, as befits a Doctor of my standing in the community, was cast aside.

However he was lost and I had to resign myself to not finding Him. With a heavy heart at such a lost opportunity, I decided to buy some Turkish coffee in a store that

lay down a flight of steps, away from the main thoroughfare. When I had finished making my purchase, still ruminating on the sadness of this lost opportunity, I put my foot on the first step of the flight that would take me back to the main concourse. The steps were narrow and impossible for more than one person to pass up or down at a time, and as I looked up I could see that someone was standing at the top of the steps, blocking the way. It was with a sense of stupefaction that I saw that it was the majestic old man, Osman Effendi, who stood at the head of the steps and he was smiling at me.

He didn't know my intention, or anything about me, and I was bemused by what wonder he was there. There was a moment of silence that seemed to last for eternity, then I climbed the steps and presented Him with the small amount of money that seemed so important for me to give him. He took it and, without saying any words of thanks, simply smiled again and then went on his way.

From that day on we shared a deep friendship, attending prayers together and also spending moments of great meaning together in the small Sufi bookstore in one of Bodrum's backstreets. This old man was originally an emigrant from the Greek island of Crete, but his provenance was not what spoke or mattered to me, it was the way he could stare at you, almost scan you and then say the appropriate words to appease your heart. After a while I began to direct my most difficult patients towards Him, especially young adolescents; He was able to give them something no one else I knew could, a special kind of social therapy. He would accept them into His modest one room house and with his incredible radiance cure them, certainly more than I did. He warmed with His holy hands some milk in the small kitchen and then said with His soft voice and special Bodrum accent: "Drink this my son, my daughter".

But I was sure that the warming also included very sincere prayers that gave the milk and the conversation their special quality. After this treatment His newly found son or daughter would leave His house, as if transformed. One of His typical sayings, which he used at all times, was: "Everything is perfect". This was not something fanciful, He pronounced this statement with such a deep conviction and radiance that in whatever situation you might find yourself it worked its magic and the world became, for that moment, perfect.

This is the transmission of the "state" in Sufi terminology, it is like a swirl, an invisible spirit, which transcends you to another dimension for a short while. During the years I spent with Osman Effendi I had the chance to be present and assist Him in other miraculous acts. He was without any doubt a holy man and I can feel him about me

at this present moment, warning us from his eternal dwelling/abode (what the French call his demeure), reminding me to keep my grandiosity in check. "Shhh"... he is saying with a gentle finger to his lips: "Even what you have said is too much, anything more and you will scare away that nervous bird of the higher unconscious".

Rather than have me drive away the gift of insight through words that could easily fall into self-aggrandisement, take a magnifying glass and look into His eyes; you may be gifted or open to see what I mean. Because the lovers of God, people who have spent their lives for His cause don't die, only the body vanishes and their acting (tasarruf) continues for eternity.

And say not of those who are slain in God's cause, "They are dead": nay, they are alive, but you perceive it not.

The Second Surah Al-Baqarah (The Cow) 2/154

Every story in the world as we know it has an end and for this hidden Prince of Bodrum his end came after two losses; in a short time firstly His beloved wife and then His old friend Sharif Effendi. At this point he decided that the time had come to leave this world, but in a soft way that was in keeping with who He had become. He didn't eat any more and melted before my eyes with every day. All my struggles to feed Him were in vain. With a smile on His face He disappeared from the earthly plain.

His end had special qualities, with something very strange happening as His physical body faded. The more His body decomposed, the more He became luminous! He began to shine and all the time he made no complaint, expressed no sorrow and did nothing unnecessary.

During His last days I managed to convince Him to go to a hospital in İzmir. He accepted my request with the same strange smile in His face that had been there when I'd given Him the small present during our first meeting, on the steps outside the coffee shop. The doctors at the hospital couldn't help, His physical body was ready to end and we left the hospital after a couple of days. At this point, the decomposition of His body was even more advanced, His flesh consuming itself and falling apart and my heart couldn't carry being with him anymore in such a state. I took His hand in my hands and said: "Please..." but I got no further with the request I wanted to make of him. Instead I experienced one of the most amazing phenomena of my life. He stared at me with an incredible light and spoke softly with his soft voice to me, reminding me that: "Everything is perfect".

Please pause from reading at this point, put your hand on your heart and look again on His picture and into His eyes, then you will see it... and hear his gentle request for you to be softly quiet. Feel his finger go to his lips and his luminous invitation to 'Shhh...'

... What lay behind the compulsion to tell Osman's story?

It was during the afternoon of the second day of my London conversations with John that Osman Effendi came to mind; or rather it was His photograph that took my heart. I was showing John an example of how this book could be, drawing on something I'd written for the Turkish world, when Osman Effendi's gaze caught me again – almost as if for the first time. I became animated, got up from the table we were sitting at in John's conservatory and all but danced as I shared my encounters with this incredible human being. I needed John to experience the un-chosen compulsion that happens when you open yourself up to the divine light of another.

Osman Effendi's story as I have told it to John and you lacks all traditional logic; I could see John's brain whirring to make sense of why I had followed Osman Effendi from the Mosque. Maybe he reminded me of my father? Maybe my need to give a gift was a symbolic way of me paying amends for some sin that I had committed? Maybe there was some archetype that Osman Effendi evoked in me? I could see John wanting to talk in the traditional terms of transference and counter-transference, slip into the comfortably familiar language of the Western psychological tradition. His instinct was to categorize and label Osman Effendi's way of knowing the world in some pathological or pejorative way. Osman Effendi was obviously in some form of delusional state, which by the end served him well as he stepped towards the pain of wasting to death.

As for my reaction to reach out and meet Osman Effendi when he was still a stranger to me? My need to give him gifts? Well I could believe John would have been fascinated if we'd changed our focus of conversation at that point and he'd sat with me as he explored, and got to understand, my family history and the unresolved demons within me.

But Osman Effendi speaks to me of what it is to embrace a Sufi way. There is the heartfelt compulsion to act, to be generous to another without reason, or rather without the reason of the ego or the intellect. I had to give my gift to Osman Effendi because I could do no other – this was not an act I chose, rather I was caught up in

an energy, a sense of the world, that flowed through me. I could even say that it was the act that chose me and I simply happened to be the person who was available, at the time, to be acted through.

Then there was Osman Effendi's lack of interest in the material world, a theme that would play up time and again as we worked on this book together. John fights hard not to be part of his cultural upbringing, but it is tough work – and it becomes ever harder as he struggles with a Sufi tradition that is proudly immaterial. John represents my fear of what the Anglo-American tradition might do, and does do, when presented with the subtle insights of tradition such as Sufism. His drumbeat is to make the world tangible, to codify what has not yet been turned into a code of conduct. He wants to fix all meaning, pin it like a butterfly collector might gas and pin a new addition to be displayed in a glass case. A course of action that is always fatal for the butterfly as something filled with fluid and dynamic beauty.

I was fortunate that John's previous editorial work had brought him face to face with this habit of his before. He'd wrestled with telling the story of Kevin, a colleague of his. Kevin works in the world of organizations, which is a world dominated by simplistic mantras, where everything can be boiled down to a list or a task. Where not to have a plan that can be described through bullet-points and a list of tasks with a memorable mnemonic would be viewed as all but unprofessional. But Kevin knows that there is something mysterious in the universe, which plays out when you put people together. There are strange currents that speak to heartfelt intuition and not to the abstracted knowing of the mind. Kevin is the one who helped John to see that when you kill a butterfly to collect it and put it into a case, you no longer have a butterfly.

Osman Effendi's story is also the gift neither John nor I knew we needed. When I told the story I kept repeating the phrase: 'Everything is perfect.' I would say it in the middle of a sentence when it had no apparent need to be there. It was a phrase that was calling out to me, or more probably through me, and it was John who in the end suggested later on that day... 'Osman Effendi has given us the title for the book!'

... Everything is perfect

The human race and its great psychological thinkers have dragged us into the mire of life. We have been taught that the only way to look is down and the only thing to notice is our ugliness and the ugliness of the world and our nature.

To insist that *everything is perfect* is an assault on some of our most treasured cultural traditions. It invites us to see the world through the lens of what is and can be beautiful; it challenges us to consider what it would take for us to embrace perfection in the world. It invites us to cross the threshold into a world that is largely unimaginable to the modern Western mind, especially when the notion of perfection has nothing to do with material wealth or physical well being. What is this perfection that is not paraded through the over-toned physique of the gym, or the size of financial assets available for an individual to parade in front of others?

Osman Effendi's perfection is that which comes from a lived holiness or Saintliness, from allowing yourself to be an expression of the world while acknowledging that your presence is not somehow being burnished by it. This is perfection without ego, the perfection that is possible when the ego has been let go of and the universal has taken the you of you away.

When Osman Effendi says *everything*, he could be seen to be speaking to the perfection that exists in the entirety of the world – the perfection of the whole, rather than the part. When we obsess about ourselves and our identity we are cutting ourselves off from an experience where we are in the whole. Instead our self-centered obsession insists on us seeing ourselves as somehow sitting outside of the wholeness of the universe. Part of Osman Effendi's experience of perfection comes from the stepping away from the fantasy of separateness, instead his is the story of what happens when you step into a wholehearted experience of universal being, the full harmony of the heavens:

[Hallowed be] He who has created seven heavens in full harmony with one another: no fault will thou see in the creation of the Most Gracious. And turn thy vision [upon it] once more: canst thou see any flaw?

The Sixty-Seventh Surah Al-Mulk (Dominion) 67/3

Perfection comes from a felt belief in connecting into a sense of ascension, of developing and rising beyond the day-to-day fixation on the mundane and subterranean. Perfection is that embracing of the better angels of our nature and the universe, rather than the devils and demons that are given centre stage by Freudians and materialists.

Chapter 6. Amber horizons - Sufi Dreaming

‘I dreamt one night of a stand that stood in the open air – it had three tiers of dark wood and on the top tier there was a selection of ambers, beautiful but not of very much value. I felt, in the dream, no need to buy them – I could take them or leave them.’

‘The bottom tier of the stand was fringed by a curtain and I couldn’t see what was behind it. I knelt down and drew back the little curtain and found a much richer haul... there was a fine selection of even more precious ambers and these ones I wanted to possess, to buy. But as I reached for my wallet an inner voice spoke to me: “Look around Mustafa,” said the voice. “Get off your knees and stand up. Pay attention to the world around you” And so I stood up and looked around me – and as I looked around me all the landscape became amber, hills and mountain ranges, all made of amber... everything beautiful and precious, stretching for as far as I could see’

For me, as a would-be practicing Sufi, this dream was full of meaning. The stand with its ambers speaks of a world of presenting value and beauty, easily found and while attractive enough lacking in compelling attraction. For people who are not used to any form of beauty, it is easy to think that these obvious and readily available seeming treasures are all there is. For people who are used to easy knowledge, to a world of sound-bites and where the twenty minute TED talk is seen as a source of deep insight, this type of wisdom is what they are drawn to – the obvious, the seemingly appealing, but lacking in any real value as a call to the ascending self.

The second part of the dream, where I notice the curtain and the disguised part of the stand, speaks of two perspectives. Firstly it is the invitation to look for what is hidden, not to presume that what needs to be found can be found in the obvious places. It is also a valuing and validation of the knowledge that comes from the lower self, the focus of much, if not all, traditional Western psychology. There is truth that requires us to look down, to pay attention to what we have buried and hidden away – but the crucial part of the dream, the part that speaks to the Sufi sense of a hopeful and all encompassing wonder (what Osman Effendi would tell me is at the heart of his capacity to see the perfection in everything), comes with the third part of the dream.

It is when I get off my knees – when I stop fixating with what is hidden and underneath – and hear the call to raise my sights and see the world as a whole that I know the perfection and wonder that is all around me. The world is made out of beauty, it is not something that needs to be harvested and stored in gems.

... On the nature of dreams and the protection they offer

Many dreams, even the most chaotic ones, could be gifts from our Higher Self - that which is informed by divine inspiration and not by our ego fantasies. Because the human being is not left alone and helpless even during his sleep. The following ayah explains this:

It is God [alone that has this power - He] who causes all human beings to die at the time of their [bodily] death, and [causes to be as dead], during their sleep, those that have not yet died: 44 thus, He withholds [from life] those upon whom He has decreed death, and lets the others go free for a term set [by Him].

The Thirty-Ninth Surah Az-Zumar (The Throngs) 39/42

The Arabic word used for "withholding" mentioned in this ayah is "**tavaffi**" and comes from the root v-f-y and "**istifauhu**", meaning to take something completely. The dead in this sense, refers to the withholding or complete taking of the soul. The other word in the ayah: "He withholds (from life)"... "**yumsiqu**" comes from the root m-s-k and the first meaning in Ragheeb al Isfahani is to adhere to something with the aim of protection (as in Surah Bakara 2/229). And we also know that nothing in the entire universe can happen without His leave or permission.

GOD - there is no deity save Him, the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsistent Fount of All Being. Neither slumber overtakes Him, nor sleep. His is all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth. Who is there that could intercede with Him, unless it be by His leave? He knows all that lies open before men and all that is hidden from them,²⁴⁷ whereas they cannot attain to aught of His knowledge save that which He wills [them to attain]. His eternal power ²⁴⁸overspreads the heavens and the earth, and their upholding wearies Him not. And he alone is truly exalted, tremendous.

So because of this closeness to our all-passionate Lord, even when we are asleep, it must be by His reason and permission that such scenarios are given to us to experience. Let me give an example: imagine that a dear friend of yours has a bad habit and is endlessly sarcastic towards people in his daily life. You warn him many times, explaining that his habit causes harm to people but he is unable to understand

you and your warnings. Then you choose another method to teach him. You secretly film him on camera and after a while, when enough material has been gathered, you show these recordings to him – choosing a time when he is in good mood and is likely to be open and receptive. With wonder he observes himself and even feels shame at his behavior then, after this reflexion and confrontation with the unnoticed part of himself, the correction begins of its own accord.

Over my life I have received and recorded many dreams of my own; they are the story of my development along my psycho-spiritual journey. My clients will often bring me dreams, which we explore together and I also dare humbly to make use of a large compendium of Sufi dream analysis knowledge, built up over hundreds of years. The analysis, however, that we make as psychologists and psychiatrists has a fundamental difference to that which the Sufi master (Murshid-e Kamil) practices during the spiritual teaching of His disciple. That teaching is called sayr-e suluk⁵, and the disciple is referred to as either salik or derwish, and the work is at a much deeper and more developmental level.

... The three categories of dream

The Sufi's classify dreams in terms of three categories. Firstly there are those that are labelled as being about "Unique Discovery" or kashf-e mucerrred. In these dreams the Sufi Master is able to discover for the dreamer an exact meaning that tallies with their existing day-to-day reality.

In the material of the dream, the mundus imaginalis or alam-e mithal (upper unconscious), phenomenon can be found that exist within the world outside of the dream – what we would casually refer to as reality. This incredible sounding dream interpretation comes through the reading of the existence before it is realized and comes about because, and please excuse me for this barbaric expression, the Mursheed has a direct access to the hard disc of the world. This hard disc contains the pre-existent state of all phenomena, which are called the permanent archetypes, also known as "lawh-i mahfous" or the protected tablet where the timeless Divine

⁵ Sayr-e suluk means "the practice during the voyage". The way the Dervish behaves, exists under the teaching (irshad) of his Sheikh. There is a constant refinement in all aspects (or categories of relating) of the twenty four hours of daily life. These categories are general human relations, relations with the world (mineral, vegetal and animal - all carry Gods spirit), relation with one's own self and relation with God.

knowledge is kept. This explanation needs to stop here as we feel we are stepping into the egoism of apparent wisdom!⁶

Secondly there are dreams of “Symbolic Discovery” or kashf-e muhayyal. In these dreams the Sufi Master is able to lead the dreamer to make sense of the meaning of the phenomenon, or object dreamed about, in something other than a literal way. So when the dreamer reports, for example, that they have had a dream about milk, the Sufi Master is able to move beyond literal sense and instead, in this case, interpret milk as a symbol of wisdom.

Thirdly there are those dreams that fall into the classification of “Unique Imagination” or hayal-e mucerred. In dreams of this type the vision of mundus imaginalis, the material of the dream, is blurred because the Real Self, the Djan, is covered by the thoughts and feelings of the commanding self, the nafs-e ammarah⁷.

As psychologists and psychiatrists we generally work with this third kind of dream, dreams of “blurred vision”. Even though we don't possess the wisdom of a Sufi Sheikh, we can still help our patients and clients learn some lessons from them. Typically these concern discovering the shadows of our lower unconscious and how the personas of our daily life can help us progress to the higher levels of our nafs/psyche. Sometimes, though not often, we are even invited to the marvelous vision of the higher unconscious, Allahualam (Allah knows better)!

... Dreams are loving gifts, which give us just enough insight

The quality we want to highlight in this short exposition concerns the fundamental orientation that Sufi informed therapists take towards their dreams. For someone working with a Sufi inspired approach, dreams are approached as loving gifts from within ourselves. We all have within us that splash of divine light that comes from our briefly known prior experience of perfection. Dreams have the capacity to be suffused with this wonder, this most gorgeous sense of what we can dream of ascending to.

But the gap between where we are currently positioned in our lives, in terms of the axis of the lower and upper unconscious, cannot be bridged in a single leap. For a

⁶ Those of you who would dare to read more on this theme, we recommend the book written by the late Toshihiko Izutsu, inspired by the 13th century Sufi scholar Ibn Arabi -qs- and Lao Tse, Sufism and Taoism and edited by Iwanami Shoten.

⁷ This insight comes from the work of Sharh-e Mathnawi, A.AvniKonuk, Band 8, page 372, Kitabevi Ed. İstanbul 2011.

dream to reveal that gap in a single flash would be too much for us to bear, as we know for a moment the scale and scope of how far we had fallen and we cannot envisage having the capacity to bridge such a gap. The loving gift of the dream is in how it shows us just enough, so we can take the next step that we are capable of taking and growing into. A loving friend knows what we can take on at any one moment in time; they know when we are ready and open to hear what we need to hear.

... Dreams can give us insight from another dimension

Sufi oriented dream interpretations are the most wonderful food, they bring together the universal, the personal and what is specific to the here and now.

Dreams of higher unconscious (alam-e mithal) are very important because they bring relational and spiritual meaning making to our understanding of the human psyche. The apprehension of our existence gains another dimension, as if an invisible window suddenly appears and the paradise in us becomes apparent, the planet Avatar is now seen not as a place far away but somewhere hidden within us.

When we are in the presence of these dreams, then our senses and sensations, that for so much of the time we consider to be limited and clumsy, become refined and subtle. The colours are brighter and more vibrant; we are in the presence of a different form of aesthetics and can feel a harmony that seems not to be from this world. But our daily vocabulary is not enough to describe these states, the world changes its boundaries, space and time become relative and this relativity let's us feel a sense of freedom that we have never experienced before.

Most important of all is the lasting impression that these dream states gift to us, through the experience of these subtle senses and sensations we now know with our whole bodies how the world can be known. We have been granted a taste of what is possible, almost literally a taste of the perfection of paradise. In the aftermath of these loving gifts from our higher unconscious, our mood can change for days, weeks and sometimes for the rest of our lives – as we find ourselves unable to forget these great dreams.

Another characteristic of Sufi oriented dream interpretation is the combining of both objective and subjective interpretations. The figures on the stage are first examined as objective, universal symbols. For example, a man in a furious rage might represent how the dreamer experiences the male world. But this same figure is also

one of his or her furious selves. Each dream can also be known - as something that can be explained through the head and more importantly through the heart – and through the internal shifts in state they create, rather than as simply an exercise in detached explanation.

The interpretation of the ‘Amber Horizons’ I gave above is largely objective and most certainly comes largely from the head – it was the interpretation John was most comfortable hearing when he first heard the story. The physical items in the dream are significant in themselves; the gemstones have a monetary value, as can be seen in my reaching for the wallet – some aspects of meaning are not obscured by some clouds of metaphysical ambiguity!

The curtain at the bottom of the stand is closed and is hiding something. The mountains that I see when I get to my feet are not made of any old rock, they are made of amber that is something precious and beautiful that has been forged in the heat of the earth. The dream is full of specific objects that help connect the dreamer with the world of given values.

My body is also present in the dream and I am not some disembodied spirit being. I am literally an embodied presence and I can see that I change my physical state as I shift from looking at the obvious top-tier of the stand, before getting onto my hands and knees to explore what lay behind the curtain. Then I finish in a standing state, able at last to bear witness to how the world has changed around me when I shifted from being a squashed person looking down, to a stretched and full one taking in the new ‘Amber Horizon’.

The subjective meaning lies in how the dream transformed my state. It was at the point of me experiencing this dream that the vital importance and reality of the upper unconscious became clear – up until this point I had only known of it dimly, now I had been brought into full contact with it. This was a dream that left me full of light and life; it was the moment when I was able to incorporate what Osman Effendi had been telling me for all those years – everything was indeed perfect! My focus of attention was at last able to shift from what lay hidden, from the smallness of the life I was attached to, with its focus on what lay hidden behind the lower curtain, and at last I could feel the presence of universal beauty in everything.

Dreams cannot be demanded or made to fit with the needs of the ego – and their meaning lies beyond the power of words (it lies in their felt experience)

As John worked with me on the 'Amber Horizons' dream he admitted he was jealous of the knowledge I felt within me. He even spoke of wanting to will this insight and experience for himself – channeling his experience of reading Nietzsche and ominously evoking the compelling spectacle of the Nazi propaganda film 'Triumph of the Will'.

'Who wouldn't want to know the presence of universal beauty in their lives! Who wouldn't want to get up off their knees and stand full in the presence of such a vision?' He asked rhetorically.

John knows this is his ego speaking, his self on the stage. He has only recently encountered the Sufi tradition and neither he nor I know what dream gift he will receive, nor what he needs or is able to hear at this point in his life. The temptation, as he knowingly observed of himself, is to become demanding towards one's inner light, for the 'self on stage' to behave as if it knows better than the 'self in the Balcony'. The ego never knows because it is the ego that needs to die in the end and it is most resistant to this truth.

Dreams will come when the time is right and they will change us. It will always be possible to stand back from the dream and create a detached story using words to describe a dream's content and effect. But these analyzed and storied versions point towards the dream and its meaning, they can never be its meaning that can only exist within the felt experience of the dream... the thing in itself. In John's life he recalls the story of a schoolboy sending a letter to the great Anglo-American poet TS Eliot. The letter requested the poet to explain what on earth he meant with the following line from his poem 'Ash Wednesday':

'Lady, three white leopards sat under a juniper tree'

The poet apparently replied by post:

'Lady, three white leopards sat under a juniper tree'

Dreams are plays that are written specifically for us – they allow us to act in them and notice our activity and so create the possibility of reflective shift. By noticing so we are moved and become different to what we were

Having fallen out of perfection, out of the universal world and into a perceived world of parts, separation and ego – so we all have our own materials and histories to work

with. Our upper unconscious inspired dreams make sense to us because they work with our uniquely constructed perceptions of what it is to be an ego-self, within a specific cultural and historic context.

Dreams present us with images and relationships that we are able to connect with. The loving friend does not try to bamboozle us with their perspectives, which are coming from a higher place and will be largely unintelligible to our lower selves. The loving friend wants us to be able to make sense of our dream-play; these plays are not meant to be beyond our meaning making but are deliberately created to be within our grasp.

As with the 'Amber Horizon' dream, dreams that are given to us often appear with a narrative flow. They contain within them a sense of progression, which may include a moment of loss, death or pain. For me the moment of ascension when I stood up, after looking at the seemingly valuable gemstones that had lain hidden behind the curtain of the base level of the stand, was wondrous and poignant – it is still wondrous and poignant! I was stepping up in the dream, up and out from a life where I had spent many years looking behind the lower curtains both for myself and my clients.

And there is a third interpretation of this dream, but for now I want to keep it to myself. Interpretation is a constant work in progress, a living butterfly, not something to be pinned down and killed.

... A recommendation to the reader

Do take your dreams seriously, not just in your analysis of them but in the subtle states they bring about in you. Reading this book might well evoke dreams in you, some of which may have a moment of loss or disorientation as you are invited to let go of the certainty that you may have lived with for a while.

Know that your dreams are coming from a good, kind and loving place and that you need to know them with your heart.

...A last warning

There is a saying of Prophet Mohammed -pbuh- that dreams should not be told to just anyone. We know from our Masters that the first interpretation is very important and if a false interpretation is given, this interpretation could create an unhelpful, an

unloving, reality. But there are those who are specially trained to support people in the discipline of their dream interpretation – but the knowledge of the dream and the responsibility for making sense of it, or noticing the change it has brought about, rests with the dreamer of the dream.

Chapter 7. The suffering of the world's current experience – a dialogic encounter

After completing psychiatric training in Zurich, I settled down with my family in the small coastal town of Bodrum on the Aegean Sea, where I practiced psychiatry. One day I was brought up short by a question from a young woman. I'd been working with her for about two years, both in one to one sessions and in a group setting, when she asked me a question that stopped me dead in my tracks.

"After these two years," she asked, "What now?"

What now indeed! At that time I couldn't begin to answer her, I wasn't even beginning to feel my way towards the emptiness at the heart of the Western psychoanalytic tradition. We terminated the therapy without being able to find an answer to this last question and she immersed herself in a series of New Age spiritual practices that didn't serve her well.

John And what sense did you make of that?

We, as psychoanalysts, needed to be able to give people more than clinical approaches, there needed to be more to our work than digging ever deeper into our personal archaeology. The sense of there being something more is captured, for me, in the dream of a client I was working with a while ago. It was the first or second dream she had during our therapeutic work together and she opened her telling of it by speaking of standing on a top of a mountain. In front of her was a rope bridge, which would take her across the chasm to the other side. She stepped onto the bridge, keen to cross the divide, but as she approached the middle a great storm blew up and it began to swing about like crazy and she knew she had to make a choice... either to return to the solitude and known world of her mountain top or to risk the storm tossed crossing and make for the other side. She chose to keep on crossing and once there found a path going down the face of the cliff, she followed it and stepped into a world like the movie Avatar – the one where people cross into another universe by inhabiting a different form of being, a world of flying islands, waterfalls, huge magnificent trees and enchanted animals.

As she became one of these other blue beings, flying around the scenery of this other place she felt herself full of great feelings, embracing states of joy... trust... passion... these are the subtle states that the psychoanalytic tradition doesn't

understand and which are at the heart of the Sufi way. Classical psychoanalysis would consider this dream as a regressive oceanic feeling or some such return to the infantile stage of development. But the amazing reality is that such a world, this "mundus imaginalis", is part of human dream reality, a felt experience of the paradise hidden inside us. Sufi Masters even say that this "real world" we live in, is only a shadow of this inner paradise.

John I find myself wanting to ask you all sorts of reductive questions! I want to ask you to make the subtle states less subtle... I want to get you to pin down the butterfly of your thinking and experience, and so I know kill it... instead let me ask you about your own dreams that have led you towards working with something other than the clinical traditions of the Western psychoanalytic tradition

Let me return to the sadness of my young client who had asked me: "What now?" Her question was of course my question. I too wanted to find something else. By the time of her question I was already exploring other alternatives and had taken to spending a great deal of time visiting a centre in France. There I would meditate for four hours a day, learning the ways of the order and in time deciding to become a Zen Monk and bring these traditions into Turkey. But just before I committed myself to this course of action I looked into the eyes of the leaders of the centre, who had given their lives to the disciplines and practices of their community, and I saw sadness and longing. But more than anything I saw a deep strange sadness, a kind of homelessness, a deep sorrow, as if Odysseus had lost his hope of ever returning to Ithaca. So I didn't become a Monk.

A short while later, after I had come back to Turkey, I was visited by a Monk from the order, I suppose he wanted to check on my situation. We had very intensive dharma talks and with keen Zen logic he tried to convince me of the freedom of living without a dogmatic mental activity, by which he meant Islam and my Sufi orientation. But then one night he had the following dream.

In it he was walking across a great plain and came across a flight of stairs that led underground. He followed the stairs and they led him into a tunnel which in turn brought him to an iron door, which he couldn't open but which had a keyhole he could look through... and through this keyhole he could see a wonderful light, full of intensity but not harmful in any way... a great radiant light that had no hurt in it. He made desperate efforts to unlock and open the door but had no success. The next day he told me this dream and also added, "the guest house where I slept last night must be haunted"...

Although the Monk in this story had an intensive practice of meditation, and had probably attained a certain level of spiritual maturity, he still had this dream. But, as was described earlier, stasis will eventually be experienced as deeply unsatisfactory. The dream wisdom gives a very clear message... all your ascetics and efforts are of no use if you search for the light in the underworld, because you are on a wrong path. Yes, Gods divine light is everywhere but the iron door of your nafs is between you and it.

God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The parable of His light is, as it were, that of a niche containing a lamp; the lamp is [enclosed] in glass, the glass [shining] like a radiant star:51 [a lamp] lit from a blessed tree - an olive-tree that is neither of the east nor of the west - the oil whereof [is so bright that it] would well-nigh give light [of itself] even though fire had not touched it: light upon light!
The Twenty-Fourth Surah An-Nur (The Light) 24/35

John To me this speaks to a possible world that remained just out of reach, which is what I imagine your client who embraced the New Age culture was searching for

She was and it did her great damage. She could not engage with the practical consequences of her behaviors and unsurprisingly she and her husband divorced, as she was unable to see the harm she was doing him through her actions, how she was polluting the wider ecology of the world. But what her New Age experience speaks to, comes from the dangerous flaw at the heart of the work of men such as Jung, who can encourage people to think that they have engaged with a higher unconscious level. In truth all they have done by digging down and down into themselves is engage with their lower unconscious. When you think you are informed by a higher consciousness, as my questioning client did, but are actually being driven by your lower unconsciousness, then there will be damaging consequences.

John Tell me more about the qualities of higher consciousness...

This is where I need to use some Sufi terms and talk about the importance of stations. In many consciousness raising traditions people do the work required to give them a taste of something wonderful, those tantalizing experiences of joy, the passion and trust my client had in her Avatar dream... or the Monk with his seeing of something beautiful, though in his case it stayed inaccessible behind the iron door... in many settings, often in the company of some well intentioned guru, people are given an experience of ineffable wonder, they may go on 40 day meditation retreats

and feel to the full a world of loving kindness. But it cannot last, when the fuel runs out they can't keep themselves in their heightened state and instead they come down and feel bereft... they have tasted something utterly wonderful and now they have lost it and find themselves adrift in the no man's land of depression.

I have seen this in many of my old friends who embraced Zen practices, they know how to reach the state of higher consciousness, but they don't know how to deal with the consequences of stepping down and away from it. They lacked what the Sufi way calls a *station*. I have seen this in many of my old friends who embraced different New Age psycho-spiritual practices. They experience some subtle states of the higher unconscious, like equanimity, serenity, joy, wonder, mindfulness, loving kindness, compassion and oneness with all existence. But these states don't become stable and the fatal descent happens sooner or later. Especially when the universal ethical principles are not respected, then they too easily drift into alcohol, drugs and promiscuity to dull the disappointment. These states can only be permanent if they don't fade away anymore and become a station, as we Sufis call it.

For now all people need to know is that a *station* provides people with a secure base, which means they do not go through the experience of having to endure the loss of states. But this leads me into something that sets Sufism apart from much of the world that seeks to promote the development of consciousness. The Sufi way does not hold to the possibility of self-mastery, no one can be a master of themselves because individuals do not exist except as a piece in a chain of connection. As soon as people see themselves as somehow apart or separate from the world, then you get ego inflation or you get drawn into the companionship of the wrong master. As Jung observed, when you get ego inflation then you get people thinking that they have achieved something solely through their own efforts, it sets people outside of their context and so dooms them to disappointment. The Sufi way is about surrendering the self, engaging with the context, the great chain of being and the thousand years of Sufi tradition.

John I'd like to hear a bit more about ego inflation, a habit I see too much in myself. How could I inoculate myself from it?

Learning the Sufi way would be a good start! And learning the Sufi way starts with being in contact with a Sufi master. The first step is not about you seeing yourself, but about being seen by a master who scans you. It is the first step in avoiding the eventually hopeless road into the illusion of self-mastery. The master can see your actual state, read your past, what Buddhists would name as your karma. He can see what special remedies you need for your basic illness; for some that illness is pride,

for others anger, jealousy or some other consuming orientation in the world. He gives you these remedies and follows you in a very attached way as you make your journey into the heart of a Sufi practice; you'll meet with him maybe once or twice a week... but there's more to his presence than in these meetings, he also acquires a meta presence, following you from within, teaching you 24 hours a day.

When you reach a certain state, you will be examined in terms of the exercises you are following to address your basic illness... if you pass then the remedies you have been prescribed change, you may be called on to repeat some of the names of God and execute or accomplish some services as part of your development. As the remedy changes, so the teaching changes, but it continues.

John I can feel my rationalist mind coming to the fore! I want to know how you find this mysterious master?

Imagine that Sufi teaching is like being engaged in an Academy of Higher Human Development. The first step is to send your letter of intention to our all Compassionate Lord of the Heavens (Rabb ul Alemin). With this letter you become a potential candidate for this special teaching. If you persevere in your request to attend the Academy, a series of trials will start in your life. You will be tested for the sincerity of your intention - how committed you are to serving with compassion all of creation and keeping your existential ecology free of pollution. When you pass these tests than through a dream, or significant synchronicity, you might be brought in contact with a school or specific Teacher. My own humble journey may give some explanation.

Like many European searchers I started my exploration of Sufism with a visit to Konya, where the great Islamic mystic Mevlana Rumi has his tomb, and there I met a Sufi teacher who offered to be my Sheikh... I accepted his offer and followed him for a couple of years.

And then, for various reasons not important to this story, I moved on from him and was honored to be in presence of another Sheikh and it was with him that I had the very strange experience of being scanned and seen. Let me explain, this experience of being seen creates a powerful connection. When I was gazed on by this new Sheikh I knew he could see all my misery. That I was full of pride, anger, anxiety, jealousy... but He still smiled at me with the loving kindness of an all accepting, tolerant Mother. I was naked as never before but saw no disdain in His eyes! Many years later I understood that He was reflecting in His heart mirror, not my shadow but

my pure self that is the essence of all human beings, even human beings like me! It is at the heart of what gives the relationship such a sense of closeness. It is akin to the feelings one can have towards a very empathetic psychoanalyst but much more powerful... it is the experience of being accepted, of indescribable love.

The Sheikh is not like other human beings, unlike a psychoanalyst. He lives in another, higher dimension of human experience, which he has attained through submitting himself to another Sheikh. The chain goes from Sheikh to Sheikh through generations back to the founder of the Way (tariqa), the Pir and then to the ultimate circle of the chain, the Prophet Mohammed (sav). The development involved in this great human adventure to the higher existential levels sees the ego being consumed again and again at every level, a form of repeated "dying". The ego exists again and again, at many levels and has to die at each level, which is at the heart of the sacred saying below, which invites and instructs us to:

Die before you die
(Saying of Prophet Mohammed sav)

This is part of the lifelong practice for a Sufi, an instruction that lasts for as long as life goes on. This practice exists with other disciplines, such as the systematic repeating of Gods beautiful names (which is prescribed by the Sheikh) and when these names, like the codes of the universe are perfected, they become states in a Sufi's life. So for example the holy name al Wadud, or the lover, becomes the state of compassion.





I have learned from my Sheikh to pray with love and to treat all creation with compassion⁸

When He has accomplished all those states that human beings don't usually achieve, the Sufi Sheikh can be seen to be, in a way, not of this world any more. He acts from somewhere else and is from somewhere else. When the ego is fully consumed who then acts? There is no 'I' to direct affairs, to be seen as the source of direction. In his egoless presence you feel this otherness in your heart, a different quality where you are known not by another but by the perfection of the universe, unmediated by the noise and distraction of some attention seeking 'I'. By accepting your miserable being as you are, with a smile He kills you softly in His love. The connection (rabita) is so strong that even in His absence this attraction continues, day and night.

You connect through your dreams in an experience that has no terminology, only the experience. It is mainly through dreams that the experience of subtle states takes place – all human beings have the facility to dream, but the states that dreams make available mean very little to many people. Dreams are not just reports from the underground unconscious; they are invitations to experience the subtle states that lead people into a higher consciousness.

What I found by stepping into the Sufi way was what was missing in the world of professional psychotherapy – that world leads you only into the lower unconscious of the self, whereas the Sufi way addresses my young woman's question about: "What next?" What next is the engagement with and development of the higher human self, the higher human consciousness. People have known and written about the qualities of higher consciousness for years, but they have been recorded as peak experiences; the challenge has been in stepping out of the self-limiting human view

⁸ As quoted by the late Jerrahi Sheikh, Safer Dal (ks): **Tekrar (2nd citation)**

and embracing the third dimension of the human psyche, where the self no longer exists except within the experience of the whole

... Reflections on this dialogic encounter... our current experience and the suffering it engenders

Five themes can be seen as framing what leads to how we are actively creating a way of being in the world that doesn't serve us well. The five are:

- We have become fixated with pathologising our situation. We have become skilled at fixating on the wound and hurt and find it hard to notice anything else.
- We know how to engage with existential anxiety better than we do with existential hope
- Our rationality can lock us into hopelessness
- Many of our experiments with personal development have encouraged narcissism by fueling the fantasy of fast and easy transitions...
- ... And locating the source of development in the teachings of an external guru

Each of these is explored in more detail below.

1. We have become fixated with pathologising our situation. We have become skilled at fixating on the wound and hurt and find it hard to notice anything else.

Western culture fixates on medicating all manner of human experiences, with the various textbooks of mental illness growing in size by leaps and bounds. As James Hillman puts it, 'We've had a hundred years of psychotherapy – and the world's getting worse'. What we have become skilled at is turning more and more of our lives into diseases and illnesses of the body and mind. The scientific tradition, with its focus on the minutiae of the material life, is able to create ever more diagnoses of ever-smaller fractions of our hurts and wounds.

The habit of much Western thinking is to focus on what is missing, on what is deficient, rather than what is generative or abundant – there have been some attempts in recent years to counter-balance this through the advocacy of Appreciative Inquiry, but it struggles in the face of the well-grooved habit of focusing on what is lacking or seeing reality through the lens of sickness.

Undoing these habits of mind is not easy to do as they run counter to so much Western 'common sense' – which is why Sufi psychology is so important to those

who wish to embrace a focus away from the pathological. The Sufi tradition provides a deep rooted and tested practice for people to engage with, rather than the untested and shallowly rooted perspectives which people can understand readily with the mind – but which don't give them the robust foundations to turn to when assaulted by the prevailing culture of deficit and illness.

2. We know how to engage with existential anxiety better than we do with existential hope

Unsurprisingly in a world locked into a habit of seeing experience through a frame of ever-increasing sickness, hope is hard to engage with. Meanwhile anxiety is seen as being normal, the only 'real' response to a world largely known as hostile to human wellbeing. With death seen only as a negative, something to be avoided at all costs, so we cannot embrace the possibility of hope in the world – life is hard and then you die. Many cultures fill themselves up with noise and drugs to drown out the anxiety – that noise can play out in entertainments of all sorts, while drugs refers to both those seen as illegal and the pandemic of medically approved tranquilizers and other mood modifiers.

Little attention is paid to the discipline of hope, to what it takes to embrace a way of life that takes seriously the experience of existential hope, that values those internal experiences that are suffused with a sense of generative development. Dread is seen as more real, and so receives attention, while hope is seen as unreal – an epiphenomenon – deserving of little respect. Hope is degraded as the preserve of the deluded, the young or ill educated. Someone like Osman Effendi, who I see as such a beacon of hope, an exemplar of wisdom, is talked off as a fool for his apparent naivety in seeing perfection everywhere in the world. The very title of this book becomes a source of cynical humor rather than a compelling invitation.

3. Our rationality can lock us into hopelessness

A young man in Turkey recently committed suicide. He left behind a video recording, explaining his rationale... how taking his own life was the only action that made any sense to him. And in a way he was right, because his way of life, his daily habits and his persona were not supportable anymore and needed to disappear from his life scenery. But what if we could prove to him that this detestable existence of his was only one aspect. What if we could show him this tragic-comedy from the balcony, that other place, of this same existence?

This is where a pathologised culture devoid of hope and filled with anxiety will lead us. If life is a fearful experience, where sickness is the only way we allow ourselves to be known, then it offers little to live for. If one accepts the taken-for-granted assumptions of the dominant Western tradition, then its rationality will readily lock you into a reasoned argument against life.

If I am a standalone entity, apart from the rest of humanity and the universe, then my actions can only be justified in terms of my own experience. If my experience is defined by anxiety, deficiency and sickness then I will be the sole judge as to whether or not I can bear this load. Working from such a worldview I am cut-off from any sense of being part of something bigger, different or more hopeful – the bleakness of the existential condition in a world of actual and potential pain will become overwhelming. Devoid of any existential hope, I can therefore only draw on the traditions of existential dread – and spend my time always choosing between living and dying, waking each morning with the knowledge that today I must once again decide whether or not I can endure the pain of my isolation, sickness and being.

4. Many of our experiments with personal development have encouraged narcissism by fueling the fantasy of fast and easy transitions...

Not all have locked themselves into the death spiral of the young Turkish man in the video – Western culture is not only gripped by those who see the world as a grim existential inevitability, it is also gripped by those who see themselves as their own personal gods. These narcissists know themselves to be supreme in their own shrunken universe and so capable of dictating to themselves the value of whatever development or fantasy works for them.

This self-referencing individualism is then reinforced by a wider culture of easy gratification, where whatever needs to be learnt or experienced can be done quickly, easily and frequently without reference to anyone else. John tells me the story of a US management guru who stood up at a conference some years ago and said words to the effect of: 'This year I'm into Taoism, who knows where I'll be next year!' Learning becomes a pick-and-mix affair, a trivial dalliance with superficial features, mindfulness without the moral compass that must first be developed.

A friend of mine, Dr Alper Utku, struggled with this for years as he wrote his Doctorate. His supervisors kept pressing him to claim his unique knowledge, to foreground the distinctive qualities that his Sufi practice brought to his way of leading his organization. His constant fear was that he risked trivializing it; codifying what can

only be known through experience and the heart, into an attractive list of ten things any leader can do to bring Sufi wisdom to their company.

5... And locating the source of development in the teachings of an external guru

The presence of wise others, even transcendent others, is important to our developments. We are not self-resourced entities, capable of providing all our needs – letting go of this prevalent fixation is an important step, but this does not mean surrendering our development to those who would position themselves as our gurus.

To claim the status of guru is to inhabit the world of the inflated ego, which is at the opposite end of the Sufi journey – and popular culture is filled with those aspiring to, or claiming, the status of guru. A guru denies the person who follows them any opportunity for meaningful development, as they prescribe what should be happening in someone else's development experience. True development is the individual writing their own chapter, in their own blank book, guided by dreams and in the company of well resourced others.

Chapter 8. The journey is only possible if you have an ascending existence

In my extended conversations with John in London we spent time in many of his favorite places, where he likes to meet and talk with people. One afternoon we went to the Plaster Courts of the Victoria & Albert collection, a light and unusual space in its Eastern Wing. The Courts are the legacy of artefacts assembled by Victorian Englishmen during the Nineteenth Century, when there was a fashion for creating plaster replicas of the great architectural and related icons of history - plaster icons which are now often in better shape than the originals which have been corroded by pollution and weather since that time.

The biggest plaster replica that dominates one of the large halls is of Trajan's Column – and is a copy of an original that still stands in the ancient Forum of Rome. It depicts the Emperor Trajan's victories in his battles with the Dacians, who lived along the Danube at the beginning of the Christian era. While I was impressed by the technical skills of the original artists and stonemasons, as well as the ingenuity of those Victorian travellers who have preserved it for posterity, I was struck by how relevant it was to the conversation the two of us were having about the experience of ascent and how it is at the heart of the Sufi tradition.

While the column is tall, thirty-five metres in all and divided into two parts in the museum, it struck me as an example of height rather than ascent. The carving on the column was in a continuous rising band, showing different aspects of the victories and the significant moments in the campaigns, but there was little movement in the figures that were depicted. As I looked at the different levels of the carving all I could see was a series of repeating motifs and figures – while the carving told the story of the emerging triumph, the nature of the victory didn't change... I was left with a feeling that the story being told was one-dimensional; there was no sense of human beings growing or developing. Victory was victory, as if it had only one meaning and this meaning could never evolve into something different.



In contrast at the back of one of the Courts, was an alter piece from a Central European Christian church, which depicted explicit stages of ascension towards Heaven and the divine – although curiously one of the early stages was blocked off, as if it was impassable, not open to the people. This piece of tiered ascension was, however, in itself out of keeping with most of the Church pieces in the courtyard –

which consisted of a single flight of ascension to the place from which the priest would preach, or the biblical lesson read; development as a one-stage process.



... The unavoidable starting point

Both classical psychoanalytical and neo-psychoanalytic schools teach that there is a lower unconsciousness, the place where we bury what we cannot bare to admit to in our natures – where our true animal, unconstrained selves live, red in tooth and claw, kept in check by civilization and the civilizing habit. Truth has become dark truth, something that has to be kept out of the light.

In contrast to understand the Sufi way, and Sufi psychology, you have to embrace the reality of a higher unconsciousness; there is an 'up' to the human experience as well as the 'down' that our modern habits see as the real dimension of the human condition. This 'up' is also an expansive 'up' that seeks to expand the individual consciousness, this being an expansion out of the limiting fixation with the ego and

the individual self. The higher consciousness is that sense of being that lies beyond the boundaries of flesh and ego – it's the realm of perfection that Osman Effendi showed me.

For the Sufi follower this higher unconsciousness, this realm of integrated perfection, is the pre-creational experience we carry in our collective unconscious, but then fall away from through our lives, down into the world of commanding nafs and the lower unconscious. Through this fall we experience a growing sense of self, which we mistake as a great achievement, but which is actually taking us away from what we could be.

However we never erase the memory of this higher unconsciousness, we all have this as a shared collective experience that we have within us and between us. The first step towards a Sufi psychology practice comes with the acknowledgement of this as a reality – which often requires some special work focusing on letting go of an attention to the lower unconscious and stepping out of the habits of ego consciousness, habits which are skilled at dismissing and demeaning the echo of this primal knowledge.

... You have to have a sense of 'up' as well as 'down'

The 'up' and 'down' dimension is what gives Sufi psychology its distinctive orientation, the invitation to explore the world that lives at the opposite end of the ego/lower unconscious pole. Most psychological orientations have no 'up', they offer a discipline for living with the 'down', but are unable to answer the question of my client all those years ago... "What next?" Traditional psychology is essentially a hopeless psychology, one that can only show us the abyss that lies under our feet and support us in sustaining an ego identity under conditions of futility. Sufi psychology, with its invitation to explore the 'up' dimension of experience that we have been taught not to notice, provides us with the hope, the way out of the depths of hopelessness that an ego identity condemns us to.

... We have polluted the discipline of psychology

By only allowing for the reality of the 'down' pole of our self-knowledge, we have institutionalised a practice for insulting ourselves as human beings; we have destroyed any capacity for appreciating the honour of humanity. Consequently we live in a world without honour, where man's inhumanity to man can be explained and seen as the inevitable consequence of our chaotic and base nature. We torture each

other, we tolerate regimes that demonise our brothers and sisters, we are capable of sustaining indifference in the face of the pain being inflicted on our fellow citizens and on the natural world.

The Sufi focus is all about the light rather than the shadow, whereas our modern psychological traditions are forever dragging us away from the light and forcing us to walk into the darkness.

... The Freudian psychoanalytical frame is a style of civilization, not only a school of psychology

The language and thinking of Freud, and all those who came after him, is not just limited to the immediate world of psychology or what takes place between an analyst and their client. Freudian thinking has become part of what the Western world takes for granted, with its grim acceptance that human beings are harsh and naturally uncivilized, who are out to pursue their dark and personal ambitions and are only kept in check by the forces of civilization – which in turn nurtures resentment and frustration in the face of its chains.

In Norman Brown's book *Life Against Death*, in the section *a Disease Called Man* we find a resume of this worldview: *"At the heart of his analysis is one word that, if we only understand it, is the key to Freud's thought. That word is repression. The essence of repression lies simply in the function of rejecting or keeping something out of consciousness."* Brown adds that, *"Freud's first paradox, the existence of repressed unconscious, necessarily implies the second and even more significant paradox, the universal neurosis of mankind (as an analogue of the theological doctrine of original sin)"*. A main proof for Freud of these repressed unconscious wishes are what can be found in dreams.

The center of gravity of humanness slides from a 'thinking being' as Descartes described it to that of a 'desiring being'. Not only does thinking disappear in this slide, but more severely the essence of thinking in the form of contemplation disappears as well, under the logic of the Freudian psychological model. In all these reflections on dreams and the human condition, there is not one single word that speaks to a higher humanness – all that we have, according to Freud, is the lower and base aspects of our humanity.

Later in his life, when a friend Romain Rolland talks about 'oceanic feeling' as an uplifting rather than infantilizing experience⁹, Freud admits that he cannot sympathize with such a feeling since he cannot find it in himself. So in an age that likes to see itself as one of enlightenment, one of its foremost influencers is setting about the most tragic imprisonment of humanity in the dark abysses of the lower unconscious.

We have absolutely and resolutely turned away from the light, the better angels of our nature, and any sense of hope and belief in a higher universe. We have created a civilization that has blinded itself from any meaningful sense of optimism and instead we have a civilization that is fixated on the here and now of meeting immediate lusts and ambitions, which we have in turn allowed to define what is meant by the word need. Freudian inspired psychology has helped create this civilization and now offers not a cure, but a way of coping with its brutish limitations. Without light, without a sense of upward progression, we are left making the best we can in a dark cave.

In John's life, he reached a stage in his own analysis where he got in touch with his personal experience of our hopeless civilization. He dreamt during both the day and the night, of seeing himself as an emaciated youth trapped in an underground cave, tiled white – and all he could do was shout in this cave and throw his literal shit around. This cave was brightly lit by artificial light that offered no relief; it was the light of the interrogator's cell – devoid of anything natural or warming. This speaks to our Freudian civilization, filled with the harsh and unnatural light of knowing devoid of any connection to the divine or universal.

These words touch me deeply. This was a revelation from John that arrived unheralded during our writing process, and I am unable to make any comment as any comment would be superfluous.

... Stepping away from the darkness of the lower unconscious to the light of Sufi psychology

The third dimension of psychology (nafs psychology) teaches us not only of the absolute necessity of leaving this prison of our lower existence but that any level can

⁹ Freud refers to this in his 1927 work *The Future of Illusion* as well as his 1930 book *Civilization and Its Discontent*

be suffocating if we stagnate there. This is the difference between **state**¹⁰ and **station** (maqam) as we have mentioned before.

A small pair of poems by Sato Norikiyo, found in Saigyō and translated by Burton Watson in Columbia University Press, explains and expresses the qualities of this state:

*When I tire of this spot as well,
too gloomy to live in,
when I drift
on my way, pine,
you'll be left alone*

Or

*Live through the long years
pine, and pray for me
in my next existence,
I who'll have no one*

¹⁰ (**ḥāl**, Arabic: “condition”, plural **Aḥwāl**, in Ṣūfī Muslim mystical terminology, a spiritual state of mind that comes to the Ṣūfī from time to time during his journey toward God)

Part II – A Reader's Guide

...	Anchoring in some key terms
Chapter 9:	The authoring process
Chapter 10:	This is a voyage in your own landscape and of your own making
Chapter 11:	At the crossroads of knowledge

... Anchoring in some key terms

We have been using a selection of terms that are distinctive to the Sufi tradition, along with other technical spiritual terms. This page brings together an anchor of working definitions so that the readers has a place to refer to and refresh their understanding of the Sufi language:

Nafs The human psyche and the levels of development that make up its structure

Stations Established and stable existential platforms which are associated with particular levels within the human psyche (Nafs)

States What we experience as we move between stations/the different levels of Nafs

Lower unconscious The depths of human experience – the typical focus in Western psychology

Higher unconscious The heights of human experience; the distinctive additional orientation of Sufi psychology

Chapter 9. The authoring process

This book has been written as a conversation between myself, as an experienced Sufi oriented psychiatrist, and my editor – John. He is the innocent in this encounter, the one who has helped me explore Sufi psychology in a way that hopes to speak to the unformed, but curious, world of my intended readership.

In my earlier books I have described Sufi psychology from a more technical perspective, which has a certain irony given that the Sufi tradition is rooted in more symbolic expressions like poetry and rhythmic movements rather than the more abstract language of critical academia. These books also explore with more rigor, my basic complaint with mainstream Western psychological thinking and why Sufi psychology is such an important source of rebalancing.

In the stories and explanations in this book I have allowed John some license, as he built on the bare bones of the tales I told him and turned them into something that helped him make sense of the heart of the Sufi tradition.

Something very special happened between the two of us, people who had never met in the flesh but who decided to work together to develop a book. We spent two days in London, visiting parks, museums and galleries – if you'd been with us you'd have heard us engaged in earnest conversation, sharing information about what might be in the book, what themes it might explore and what stories it might put to use.

But deep within us, something strange happened. A sense of togetherness, more than simple friendship, developed as if a spark of light had brought to life a common space, a shared soul, which belonged to neither of us but has ever since been present in us waiting to be discovered. Our work together transcends the simple categories of author and editor; it certainly transcends notions of ownership – we hope that what is written here is a divine gift. So between us the question of who is writing this book has no importance any more... welcome to the Sufi state of “tawhid” or unity in loving togetherness.

Chapter 10. This is a voyage in your own landscape (and of your own making)

... Embracing the responsibility of being you own teacher

This book is a reader's guide and a voyage into your own landscape. It provides some thoughts on what it may take for you to engage with an exploration into the territory of the Sufi psychology.

An important orientation we advise you to bring to this book concern's your judgment and where that judgment is based. The following saying from the Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) is one we ask you to carry with you at all times as you read and digest:

"When you hear a saying from me, weigh it with your heart"

The sense you make of the Sufi wisdom/psychology presented here in the end rests with you, it is not a sense that others can make on your behalf; you are the one who has to weigh the worth of a saying not someone who sets themselves outside of you and makes judgment on your behalf. We can point you in certain directions or towards a particular insight, but we cannot instruct you in the sense you make. You are your own teacher.

Mevlana Rumi (qs) compares humans to a stone where a precious gem is hidden inside. This gem could be a ruby, emerald or a diamond... there are an infinite number of such precious stones that have been in existence since the beginning of time, never repeating themselves, with no two ever being alike, but all being precious in their own way and with their own facets.

There is a life-force within your soul, seek that life.

There is a gem in the mountain of your body, seek that mine.

O traveller, if you are in search of That don't look outside, look inside yourself and seek That. (source)

This requirement to be your own teacher comes in the first place from the divine nature of every human being, where each of us is the holder of the holy names of God. These names could be imagined as the codes of the universe and their number

is beyond measure. There are ninety-nine of these names told in the famous Hadith of Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) but this is not because they are limited in number, as the Hadith explains, "recite these ninety-nine names of God, from his infinite names". The Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) has chosen them and presents them to us as a special prescription to guide us to our unique expression.

The composition that every human being makes out of these names can be compared to a symphony composed from different melodies. Each of us is authorized to compose His or Her own melody in a unique way, that has never been heard before and will never be heard again. There is one name from this infinite number that is known as the Great Name (*Isim-i Azam*) and represents a person's highest potential and should guide and direct their development. Over the arc of a person's life their intention should be to be drawn to achieving their unique and perfect melody. The Mursheed-i Kamil (a Sufi Sheikh) is a person who has realized this task:

'And He imparted unto Adam the names of all things; then He brought them within the ken of the angels and said: "Declare unto Me the names of these [things], if what you say is true.'"

The Second Surah Al-Baqarah (The Cow) 2/31

All that we learn awakes in us this huge potential, we discover what we knew and forgot. And this is the reason why, the great Sufi Yunus Emre (qs) says:

Real science is to know yourself, if you don't know yourself, what kind of science is that?

... Sufi teaching is not instruction

There is a burden of responsibility for your own life that you cannot shirk, but this runs counter to many cultures that are filled with industries of learning and faith that in practice absolve people of their personal responsibility for this life-confirming work.

Where others will take this burden off you, providing you with the false comfort of off-the-shelf meaning and an excess of clarity, the Sufi way does not. It imposes no structure but instead awakens in you the dormant potentialities you already possess (or *maarifah*). The teachings and results are not crude knowledge but the ability of to draw distinctions between what is right and wrong (or *rushd*). Irshad, the way of Sufi

teaching or education¹¹, is fundamentally different from a teaching grounded in instruction and externally imposed learning:

And, Indeed, long before [the time of Moses] We vouchsafed unto Abraham his consciousness of what is right; and We were aware of [what moved] him (21:52) when he said unto his father and his people, "What are these images to which you are so intensely devoted?"

The Twenty-First Surah Al-Anbiya (The Prophets) 21/51

... What a developmental voyage or journey means to you will be unique

The Sufi way does not tell you the messages you should expect to hear or what the character of your voyage into wholeness needs to be. Following your ego's, or false self's, conviction you may imagine that your development will have the character of a voyage, but because of your uniqueness, the distinct qualities of the gem within you, quite what a term such as voyage or journey means will be unique to you. There is no absolute or universal model that will take you on your way or even announce itself to you, no way of knowing ahead of time what the shape of your development needs to be.

The more prescriptive traditions will chew the food for you that you should be chewing for yourself, digesting what you should be digesting, taking away your connection to your feeling and so stripping you of your capacity to weigh with your heart.

The world is filled with would-be gurus and the habits of consumerism, everywhere there is temptation to engage passively with the wisdom of others. We can be drawn into approaching learning as if we were still children, not in the sense of having an open-minded and naïve curiosity, but instead waiting to be instructed by all-knowing Parents and Teachers, who will fill our heads with what we need to know.

The difference between would-be gurus and a real Sufi Sheikh is that the latter has a completely annihilated ego. In one sense he doesn't exist anymore and has become a passive receptor of the will of Allah. It may seem paradoxical to be instructed by someone who has no ego identity, who in a sense isn't there, but that is the aim we are pursuing, to step into a universal form of being:

¹¹ The word education, which comes from the Latin root ex-ducere (Let it permit to come out), corresponds more closely to Sufi pedagogy.

*The Absolute works with nothing.
The workshop, the materials
are what does not exist.
Try and be a sheet of paper with nothing on it.
Be a spot of ground where nothing is growing,
where something might be planted,
a seed, possibly, from the Absolute
(From -The Essential Rumi- Translated by Coleman Barks)*

In the quotation from the Prophet that we start this chapter with, the instruction is for all of us to own our responsibility for the meaning we make of the wisdom we are presented with and to weigh with our hearts. To weigh wisdom well is not an easy craft, it is something "we" have to let the shy bird of the higher unconscious teach us to do. To be open to loving messages is comparable to a pure melody emanating from a reed, or nay-flute (an experience of *ilhamat-i Rabbani*, or divine inspiration). This inspirational melody is blown by the All Compassionate Lord of all Heavens (*Rabb ul Alemin*) and resonates on our heart-strings.

... Finding the perfect balance within us with which to weigh wisdom

Let us pay further attention to the craft of weighing wisdom well. If we weigh wisdom from the perspective of the ego, then we will find that we assess wisdom in terms of its usefulness to us as individuals, as beings apart from the universal divine teaching. We can see the consequences of this ego framed wisdom all around us, with our inability to take seriously the effects of how we live on the lives and worlds of others – classical economics talks of there being externalities in life, matters that can be seen as separate from the decision being taken. This is wisdom that is weighed in the balance of the mind and the ego, which sets itself apart from the universal whole.

We need to notice which balance we use and be open to the experience of a perfect balance, hidden somewhere deep in us. This perfect weighing balance is the purified heart, which has not only been protected from the impurities of the lower unconscious but has also been polished over years through the hard labour of ordinary existence, of finding and failing to find a way to bring its existence to our attention. Then once we have become sensitive to our purified heart, a gate opens through which that modest and shy bird of our higher unconsciousness can communicate with us.

*"O my Sustainer ! Thou hast indeed bestowed upon me something of power ¹²and
hast imparted unto me some knowledge of the inner meaning of happenings.
Originator of the heavens and the earth! Thou art near unto me in this world and in
the life to come: let me die as one who has surrendered himself unto Thee, and
make me one with the righteous!"*

(Holy Quran, Surah Yusuf/Joseph 101, M. Asad's translation)

This searching for and opening up to the balance and judgement of our purified heart is not something we can do on our own, we need to do it in the presence of others, who are at different points of their own development of this skill. At the centre of learning about Sufi psychology, practice and being is the voyage we must all take into our own landscapes, which is both a personal and a social activity – an integrated understanding of development which challenges traditional dualist thinking where activities are split into the categories of 'either' and 'or'. In the Sufi tradition everything is part of an indivisible whole.

.... Understanding the qualities of our own landscape

What is this landscape we all have? The human Odyssey begins in 'Ithaca', our paradise-like homeland in the divine presence, the home to which we will return after we have left it for our travels and adventures, to return and know it as TS Eliot wrote 'for the first time'. A line that can be found in Little Gidding and is part of his famous work The Four Quartets:

*'We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time'*

The first 18 verses of Mathnawi of Mevlana Rumi gives the metaphor of the nay-flute, the reed separated from the reed-bed and complaining...

1. Listen to the reed how it tells a tale, complaining of separations...

Saying, "Ever since I was parted from the reed-bed, my lament hath caused man and woman to moan.

I want a bosom torn by severance, that I may unfold (to such a one) the pain of love-desire. Everyone who is left far from his source wishes back the time when he was

¹² Literal 'of dominion' indicating that absolute power and absolute dominion belong to God alone.

united with it.

5. *In every company I uttered my wailful notes, I consorted with the unhappy and with them that rejoice. Every one became my friend from his own opinion; none sought out my secrets from within me.*

My secret is not far from my plaint, but ear and eye lack the light (whereby it should be apprehended). Body is not veiled from soul, nor soul from body, yet none is permitted to see the soul.

This noise of the reed (nay-flute) is fire, it is not wind: whoso hath not this fire, may he be naught!

10. *'Tis the fire of Love that is in the reed, 'tis the fervour of Love that is in the wine. The reed is the comrade of everyone who has been parted from a friend: its strains pierced our hearts.*

Who ever saw a poison and antidote like the reed? Who ever saw a sympathiser and a longing lover like the reed? The reed tells of the Way full of blood and recounts stories of the passion of Majnún (Laila and Majnoun, a love story like Tristan and Isolde).

Only to the senseless is this sense confided: the tongue hath no customer save the ear.

15. *In our woe the days (of life) have become untimely: our days travel hand in hand with burning griefs. If our days are gone, let them go! — 'tis no matter. Do Thou remain, for none is holy as Thou art!*

Whoever is not a fish becomes sated with His water; whoever is without daily bread finds the day long. None that is raw understands the state of the ripe: therefore my words must be brief. Farewell!

... Learning to look up into the light (and not fixate on the darkness below)

Our lives are, in the beginning, a moving away from this perfect home, a descent into an intermediary existence, the *nafs ammara* or the Commanding Self. And yet however low we go, we are always in the presence of the divine light of protection...

'Consider the heavens and that which comes in the night ¹³! (2) And what could make thee conceive what it is that comes in the night? (3) It is the star that pierces through

[life's] darkness: (4) [for] no human being has ever been left unguarded.'

The Eighty-Sixth Surah At-Tariq (That Which Comes In The Night) 83/1-4

¹³ In the Quranic mode of expression, *at-tariq* is evidently a metaphor for the heavenly solace which sometimes comes to a human being lost in the deepest darkness of affliction and distress (M.Asad's commentary)

At this primary station we exist beneath an abyss, in the world of the lower unconscious, the universe of the lowest of low. We are profoundly fallen from what we were, and what we can be – at the outer limit of our Odyssey away from 'Ithaca', almost unable to remember it or believe it will ever be once again in our reach.

'Consider the fig and the olive, and Mount Sinai, and this land secure! 1 Verily, We create man in the best conformation; 2 and thereafter We reduce him to the lowest of low 3 excepting only such as attain to faith and do good works: and theirs shall be a reward unending! What, then, [O man,] could henceforth cause thee to give the lie to this moral law? 4 Is not God the most just of judges?'

(Surah Tin 95 1-4)

The description of this "lowest of low" or the earthly hell we pass our lives we find in Surah 24/40:

"Or (else, their deeds are) like the depths of darkness upon an abysmal sea, made yet more dark by wave billowing over wave, with (black) clouds above it all: depths of darkness, layer upon layer, (so that) when one holds up his hand, he can hardly see it: for he to whom God gives no light, no light whatever has he!"

The Twenty-Second Surah Al-Hajj (The Pilgrimage) 22/40

But instead of being hypnotized with this abyss, having our attention sucked down into the compelling horror it contains, we can force our head to look up towards the sky, and we meet the most wonderful landscape ever created:

"God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The parable of His light is, as it were, that of a niche containing a lamp; the lamp is [enclosed] in glass, the glass [shining] like a radiant star: [a lamp] lit from a blessed tree - an olive-tree that is neither of the east nor of the west - the oil whereof [is so bright that it] would well-nigh give light [of itself] even though fire had not touched it: light upon light!"

The Twenty-Fourth Surah An-Nur (The Light) 24/35

Welcome to higher unconscious or the department of the higher Self or Djan. This is not only the paradise promised after death, this paradise exists deep within us all, as a potential in every human being that exists independent of his or her belief or religion.

This is the landscape that we all have within us – the highest and lowest of what we can be. As we open ourselves to the judgment and wisdom of our purified heart, so we discover – or rather rediscover - the feeling of inner paradise that exists within our landscape. In this encounter we come into contact with a strange state that at first glance seems to come from nowhere, because we have become so distant from it on our Odyssey away from Ithaca. This strange state is known as basic existential hope or redja.

... The experience of an invisible and compassionate companion

During this Odyssey as we decide, or find ourselves compelled, to change direction and try to make the right choices, an unexpected help comes to us. This help feels like an invisible hand and is always at our back, an all-compassionate mother, giving us that felt experience of companionship – companionship being one of the qualities of existential hope, which is one of the aspects that makes the Sufi inspired psychological tradition so different to its Western cousin. Whereas existential despair comes from an experience of being alone and apart in the universe and lacks the presence of an all-compassionate mother of hope, reminding us of how we are enfolded into a universe of belonging and participation. Hope exists in the embracing of our enfolded pledge of allegiance to be in God's universe:

'Behold, all who pledge their allegiance to thee pledge their allegiance to God: the hand of God is over their hands. Hence, he who breaks his oath, breaks it only to his own hurt; whereas he who remains true to what he has pledged unto God, on him will He bestow a reward supreme'
Surah Al-Fath (Victory) 48/10

... Being open to an unknowable journey

The voyage into your own landscape is full with unexpected surprises and trials. The ascension into hope is not some simple linear progression. Sometimes we will go off in directions that seem unhelpful or counter-productive, attached as we often are to some belief that we have knowledge about what is best for us, independent of the divine will and our purified heart. Then we will have a feeling of not advancing at all, of being stuck or blown backwards as Odysseus so often was on his ten-year voyage back from Troy.

Our purpose seems to be right and we may have some felt sense of our intention to ascend and achieve a life without ego, but things happen in the opposite direction (or

so our ego tells us, as if we knew what direction was needed) and we are left feeling exhausted. But in this state there lies a secret. If we continue with our way, stay true to the ascending intention, then with patience a miracle happens, the world changes and everything again is on its centre. But this happens to a pace and rhythm beyond our choice – all we can be is open and allow ourselves to surrender to a higher, universally encompassing wisdom:

'He who has created death as well as life, so that He might put you to a test [and thus show] which of you is best in conduct, and [make you realize that] He alone is almighty, truly forgiving. [Hallowed be] He who has created seven heavens in full harmony with one another: no fault will thou see in the creation of the Most Gracious. And turn thy vision [upon it] once more: canst thou see any flaw?'

Surah Al-Mulk (Dominion) 67/2

... Embracing new ways, letting go of what was right before

As we ascend back to our Ithaca, moving between states, so we will need to reconsider our purpose, or niyah. This has to be done as the landscape changes, as we ascend to higher levels of existence, so new laws govern this new landscape – what was true and right before, no longer is. As we are ascending so we are able to let go of the rhythm that our ego wants to give to our development, instead we have to embrace the rhythm that comes from our beloved Lord – our progress develops as we learn to be open to what will be given to us by the universe, and learn to let go of an inward orientation.

As we embrace this gifted rhythm, we can begin to see the primordial harmony of existence; not only do we see this landscape, but feel that we are part of it. This is a state known as basic existential trust or itminan. And as we write this it feels like a very wise statement and that is an immediate cause for alarm. Is this the wisdom of the ego? Where is the bird of our higher unconscious? Has our grandiosity driven it from our head?

We have been allowed to build our own craft to encounter our own landscape, while at the same time becoming less obsessed by the wonder of our personal achievements. It would be very easy for us to become overly impressed by our skills as boat builders, to be filled with wonder at our own brilliance... which would be the first piece of work we would need to work on. It is all too easy to fall back at these first steps of our ascension towards an egocentric level, because we become

impressed by our self-ascribed personal achievements during this ascension. We lose that essential insight that ascension is gifted to us, not created by us.

Whatever good happens to thee is from God; and whatever evil befalls thee is from thyself

Holy Quran, An-Nisa -Women- 4/79

... Stepping into the reality of seeing the self as a mask

The word 'Personal' comes from the Etruscan word 'phersu' and in its Etruscan root means someone who is wearing a masque. In the Sufi world, when the masque of the personal is lifted and taken away, so the person is also taken away, because the Sufi tradition sees the personal as having no more substance than a mask/masque. This can be a shock when first experienced; when this state of being person-less is known for the first time, it causes some anxiety, because we have become so accustomed to knowing the world through the masque of the self; we have become accustomed to knowing it as substantive, as the defining quality of identity, of our being.

But when we lift the masque that is the personal, the self-defined individual we thought we were, then the anxiety will leave us and a strange smiling fills our heart. Don't ask who smiles; to ask such a question is engage with the mind and this ascending voyage is not a voyage of the mind. The weighing is not an intellectual exercise, an abstraction from the felt experience of you as you are. In the Sufi tradition, it is assumed that wisdom can only truly be weighted through the heart and never through the mind.

For those people, particularly academics and those in their sway, this is a hard encounter. Knowing in the West has been vested in the head; to weigh a wise saying is to evaluate it in terms of its intellectual coherence, its linguistic precision and its capacity to respond well to argument and reason. The felt experience has been airbrushed out of what counts as real; the human capacity to feel truth through an embodied response has been decried as lacking in rigor and objectivity.

... Learning to read through the heart

To feel with the heart is not to embrace fleeting sensations of sentiment, but to bring into coursing focus the whole range of amazing feeling that our bodies are wired to experience. Our subtle body, or higher levels of nafs, is wired for a whole range of

amazing feelings, those subtle states. To weigh with the heart is to engage with deep discernment how we are moved by this wisdom we find.

It is about learning to read how we are moved, learning to notice what we have become habituated to ignoring, dismissing or overlooking. Becoming skilled at knowing and weighing with our heart is part of the developmental ascent that the Sufi path invites people to engage with. As soon as we presume to something that is not ours to presume, so we reveal how much our ego lives within us and how much work remains to be done if we are to embrace its annihilation

Knowing with the heart is another example of the two headed, or bi-polar nature, of the developing human. First comes the raw capacity to experience what the heart is saying; then comes the capacity to notice how the heart itself is engaging with what it is knowing, because real learning is what happens through practicing, not through the observing of practice. In time we become synchronized not only with the knowledge of the heart but also with its actions. Through these actions, such as good deeds, works and prayers that go beyond what is simply prescribed (nawafil/the extra prayers and good deeds done by the Prophet Mohammed) there starts a loving relationship with the Lord of all Heavens (Rabb ul alemin).

'When I love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes and his foot with which he walks'
(Holy Saying of Prophet Mohammed – pbuh -)

In time the heart learns how to know what it knows more richly and weigh its knowledge with greater discernment. Much Sufi learning means learning how to know the world differently – especially for those brought up in the Western, materialist and rationalist traditions. It requires a profound shift in our philosophical roots and habits of being.

... Closeness through knowing, through sight and through inhabiting the truth

Let us explore further this curious statement, that 'knowing with the heart is another example of the two headed nature of the developing human'. First we look from a balcony and see someone who seems a lot like us acting on a stage, then this person comes before a window and outside is an unimaginably beautiful landscape and we see this person, who looks a lot like us, framed by this beauty. Knowing about the window is closeness through knowledge or ilm al yaqin, while coming close

to this window and wondering about the landscape is closeness through sight or ayn al yaqin.

But it isn't enough to only know by knowledge and sight we should also go through this window to this other side, the world beyond the stage and the actor. We should experience and inhabit this landscape, breathe the scent of its flowers, be touched by its caressing wind. When we are in this landscape and having that experience of undifferentiated being, then we are having an experience of closeness with the Truth or Haqq'alyaqin.

"Lord, show me things as they are"
(Holy Saying/Hadith of Prophet Mohammed -pbuh-)

In the following story we explore further what it means to know the world differently. The story is about the disciple, Molla Nasruddin and the empty birds nest:

When out walking one day in the woods Molla Nasruddin and his disciple came across an empty birds nest. The disciple gave it a cursory glance; there was nothing there to hold his attention, after all what was there to be seen in a deserted bundle of twigs and grasses? Even the tree it was in was no different from a hundred others they'd already walked past. So he walked on, on the look out for sights and sounds that would be worthy of his attention. Some minutes passed and he realised that his were the only footsteps he could hear. Where could Molla Nasruddin have gone? He retraced his steps, back along the non-descript path with its non-descript trees and shrubs, until he finally came across Molla Nasruddin. He was in a state of absolute wonder, in a state of joy at the discovery of the nest that the disciple had walked past with barely a flicker of interest. Molla Nasruddin was moving like an excited bird himself, searching high and low around the nest.

The disciple was perplexed by, what seemed to him, this eccentric behaviour. He waited for an explanation but none came. Molla Nasruddin was far too busy exploring with infinite care the area around the deserted nest. The disciple was less curious and more frustrated by this behaviour and finally cracked.

'What on earth are you looking for?' He asked. 'It's an empty birds nest. There's nothing to be seen or found. Can we get going please!'

'Think!' Said Molla Nasruddin. 'Think like a bird!'

'If you were a bird would you hide your eggs in a nest where they could be easily seen by everyone. Of course not'

'So the eggs are there,' said the disciple, 'But not obviously so...'

'Exactly,' replied Molla Nasruddin

... Learning from subtle distinctions

When Molla Nasruddin says: “Think!... Think like a bird! If you were a bird would you hide your eggs in a nest where they could be easily found”, this can invite the reader to imagine wisdom as something to be grasped and obtained. A different meaning is created if rather than the eggs being easily found, we talk of the eggs being easily seen by everyone. The Sufi path is into seeing the world anew, in a way that is not obvious given where we are starting out from. Learning to see what we have learnt not to see is the discipline we seek.

And let us reframe one more piece from the end of the story, where we have the disciple saying: ‘So the eggs must be hidden’, rather than: ‘So the eggs are there, but not obviously so’. If we put it that the eggs are hidden then Sufi practice might be read as nothing more than some giant children’s game, in which a playful parent has hidden the birthday party prize behind a cushion or the curtains. Wisdom is not hidden; it is simply present in a way that is less obvious. The end of the story reads more richly if it finishes with: ‘So, the eggs are there...but less obvious’.

It is often what we know through our heart that points us towards the hidden, or rather the less obvious, meaning – our heads will keep us stuck into patterns of the obvious or what we expect to see as significant.

Sufi oriented psychotherapy, or guiding into your own landscape, is a voyage that will be filled with hidden meaning; it will take you to insights you didn’t know ahead of time. It will be subtle and you will have to learn to notice what you notice – and what your current habits of noticing make you blind to.

... Revisiting the exploration of the Country of your higher self

We have already explored one telling of the story of our inner landscape and how we might know it. But that has been in an abstract voice and the Sufi way is to present the multiplicity of paths that will be presented to us. Set out below is another presentation of the human landscape, which invites you the reader to know what we have already represented in another way.

When John and I first met in person to discuss this book, he took me to Tate Britain – an art gallery in London. We talked about trusting to the quality of the beginners mind and how this innocence can lead people into deep insight, when they are unpolluted

by experience and expectation and the head doesn't interfere too much with the insight of the heart.

This sense of their being a secret, or hidden/less obvious knowledge which was more available to the uninitiated than the initiated eye led me to explain one of the most significant insights behind Sufi thinking. The Sufi way is predicated on the experience of their being a higher self, a self that is illuminated by divine light. I wasn't sure at the time how this had landed with John; he seemed unmoved by the insight, concentrated on taking his notes and radiated his normal intellectual curiosity and social politeness.

The conversation came to a pause and we finished our tea before walking around some of the galleries. John took me to one of his favourite paintings, a nineteenth century work by the English artist JMW Turner with the title 'Caligula's Palace and Bridge'. I normally don't work with art, but this painting provided us with a perfect metaphor for talking to the presence of the divine and all touching light.

The painting depicts the ruins, high and low, of the Emperor Caligula's palace in ancient Rome – this includes the remains of the grand structures and arches, the towers of the churches as well as the cellars and underground caverns that were now inundated by the river. The foreground has the remains of the bridge and the river reaching across the ruins and out into its wider, broader stretches. But what is most distinctive is the glowing and suffusing presence of the light; it glows and radiates throughout the painting, coming through the gaps in the fallen masonry, even illuminating the darkest and most hidden aspects of the underground features of the palace – and every person in the piece is splashed with light. Turner's light is everywhere, touching all of the painting and reaching up into the skies in a vibrant, living pile of the most beautiful gold.

The message in the painting for our work together and for you as a reader of this book is that there is a light shining on you (and in you), if only you can let yourself feel and see it. All you have to do is make the smallest of turns and you will find this country of the higher self available to you; there is nowhere in your life, nothing in your darkest recesses that cannot be reached, that isn't already touched by this all encompassing light.

And maybe John had already known about the self that is illuminated by divine light; it was his bird's nest that he had overlooked until now.

Chapter 11. At the crossroads of knowledge

.... The first challenge; avoiding the lure of the ego in authorship

We have written and talked extensively about Sufi psychology, its structure and how it can enrich the world and all beings that inhabit it, but this has been within the comfort of one of our mother tongues – Turkish. This has made it easier to stay rooted in the original sources of Sufi inspiration. To write about it in English is more than an exercise in technical translation, it's about engaging with a world that lives with very different assumptions about how the world is known and what is seen to make sense.

We have also deliberately chosen to write as 'We' where we can... the use of the word 'I' is not part of the Sufi tradition, leading as it does back into the delusional fantasies of the ego. In this book the author, Mustafa, uses the words we and I alternatively. When talking about his personal experiences he says "I" but "I" is not a preferred expression because of its egoistical associations.

The temptation can be to present Sufi psychology in such a way that it sits within the English language heartlands of the Anglo-American traditions, but which compromises some of the essential qualities of Sufi wisdom. If we were to fit in with these heartland traditions we would now move onto a succinct and seemingly definitive list of these Sufi qualities, providing what is called in many circles a heads-up, or pre-telling of the story so that the story is stripped of its mystery – and allow you, the English language inhabitant and reader, to have some easy to digest morsels so you can swallow Sufi knowledge fast, easily and obviously. That is not the Sufi way!

Instead we try in this book to replace dry verbal explanations with experienced states of being, while realizing the paradox of what we are trying to achieve! We hope to share with you as readers an experience of these states, as an ascension from a state dominated by the intellect to one grounded in the heart. These ascending, subtle states¹⁴ are the common good of all humanity and exist in a form of prior knowledge within all of us, without distinction. Our work with you is an act of remembering these ascending states for yourself, in yourself, discovering them again

¹⁴ In Arabic the word is *hal* or *awhal* (plural) *mas*. Drawing on spiritual states of mind that come from time to time during the ascension through *nafs* levels or during the journey towards God. As far as we know the first description in western tradition comes - inspired by William James - from Charles Tart, in his 1975 book "States of Consciousness", as discrete altered states of consciousness

– as if for the first time, but actually as a process of rediscovery. Welcome to the shared and common heartland of all humanity this is the world of the Higher Self, the Djan:

*2035. The Unseen World has other clouds and water (than ours); it has another sky
and sun*

(Mevlana Rumi, Mathnawi, Nicholson, Band I 2035)

This world of the Higher Self is explored in the commentary on the above verse of Hakím Saná'í: "In the realm of the soul are skies lording over the sky of this world. In the Way of the spirit there are lowlands and highlands, there are lofty mountains and seas." There is more to the world than we can know or imagine, we grow by opening ourselves up and embracing the universe beyond the constraints of what we believe we know to be the limits of knowledge and being.

... Letting go of the need to inflate one's sense of self-importance

The Sufi way does not wish to encourage self-aggrandizement or narcissistic inflation – which is at odds with Western cultural norms, where self-inflation is actively encouraged, where no one raises an eyebrow at seeing themselves as a brand to be marketed, where every job is a sales job and self-promotion is at the heart of so much human interaction. This self-promotion and self-inflation is present in all walks of Western life, nowhere is free of it; the social, personal, professional, commercial, even charitable aspects of people's lives are soaked in it.

Self-inflation is at the heart of the current English language tradition with its habit of seeking to attribute everything to an individual 'I', and that is something we have to guard against for ourselves. To write a book like this, that seeks to bring the Sufi way to people's attention (without falling into the trap of advertising it), is inherently dangerous for our own development as people who embrace, or seek to embrace, the Sufi tradition. We run the risk of inflating our importance, of making claims for insight and knowledge that are not ours to make. We risk corrupting the reader by seducing them into the impression that meaningful learning can be achieved through reading and intellectual engagement. We can sound as if we are gurus of some kind, or have achieved some stage of development that is considerably greater than that which we feel we have.

We are more comfortable working with those perspectives which focus on the social and relational qualities of being and learning – rather than the traditional Western focus on individual attributes.

... The shy bird of un-demanded wisdom

Talking about wisdom is like walking along the edge of a deep, dark abyss; with every ill-chosen or unnecessary word we can fall into its darkness, which is actually the black hole of our own vanity. Vanity has all of the destructive potential of a black hole, skilled at luring us into its ways and forms of expression, hiding itself with many justifications and explanations as to why it is not vanity. Because wisdom should be experienced first hand through personal realization, wisdom without this way of experiencing it is like a one winged bird.

Within the Sufi tradition, wisdom is often represented as a shy bird, that you can imagine carrying on your head. You can't order it to be there, or insist that it remains. Wisdom is easily put off by the clumsiness of our vanity or our belief that it is something that can be captured and locked into place; with the slightest arrogant word or puff of vanity so we make this bird of inspiration fly away. Without this shy presence none of us can experience the states that can come through a Sufi inspired ascension. We can all learn about the intellectual quality of the Sufi states, but this is like encountering a wonderful rose, beautiful to the eye but without any scent. As soon as you feel the "scent" then you can be certain that the bird has returned, that your vanity and arrogance is quiet enough to allow for the possibility of something else, something better, something inspired.

*'At the moment of munificence that chosen Messenger would demand of us
attentiveness and a hundred reverences.*

*'Tis as when a bird is (perched) on your head, and your soul trembles for fear of its
flitting,*

So you dare not stir from your place, lest your beautiful bird should take to the air;

You dare not breathe, you suppress a cough, lest that humá should fly away;

*And if any one speak sweet or sour (words) to you, you lay a finger on your lip,
meaning, "Hush!"*

*Bewilderment is (like) that bird: it makes you silent: it puts the lid on the kettle and
fills you with the boiling (of love)'*

(Mevlana Rumi, Mathnawi, Nicholson, Band 5, 3245-3250)

As we've written this book we've had to watch ourselves with our other head, the second one that can sit outside of the usual one that's currently busy getting on with its day-to-day life. This second head notices and sees how we continue to play out the habits of being, which we dream of one day letting go of. With one head we are still in the grip of our narcissism, our desire for notice and personal attribution, while with the other we can see some of the unfinished work we have to do if we are to outgrow this persistent and popular perspective of the ego.

... Seeing with the second head that has no "I"

Let's give an example... What a wonderful perspective it is to observe the stage where we act during our life, looking at ourselves from a balcony and laughing about it. But who is the observer and who is doing the acting? Or what about something that sounds even crazier, how about the something that could be called "I" observing both of them, the one acting and the one in the Balcony, from nowhere – from a place or position that doesn't exist? We are forever getting caught up in a bundle of "I" positions, seeing ourselves in an ever-reflecting set of mirrors showing our own reflection. We need the "I" that is not "I"; the eye that can sit outside of our various "I" identities, that helps us see ourselves in ways that our identity fixated "I" cannot.

And even that statement inflates how much we can know of what is needed for us to develop as a Sufi; we cannot know from where we are now all that is required for us to escape from our own ego, our fixation with retaining a sense of self. We cannot know what divine and loving gifts will present themselves to bring about what we cannot bring about according to our own will. Our belief in our own will is of course one of the great stumbling blocks we must face, because a belief in the individual will assumes a power that comes from within us, it assumes that to ascend we must start with our isolation rather than stepping out of the fantasy of isolation and into the world of the universal, God given light.

... Letting go of the noise of our acquisitive mind

As soon as we pronounce something to be a "wise" statement and say "I" am the author of this wisdom, so the shy bird on our head flies away! This bird can always sense the rank and unpleasant stink that come from the abyss of personal vanity and arrogance. So what is that we as seekers after wisdom can do? How do we step-out of the acquisitive trap? How do we change ourselves from seekers after wisdom, or collectors of knowledge, into people who are simply open to the universe? Where is the answer to where wisdom will be found when we cannot claim wisdom for

ourselves? Certainly not in the usual way of asking our intellect and letting our mind speak its truth out loud, maybe instead we need to have the courage and humility to take refuge in silence.

We could try putting our hand to our heart and be willing to be silent for a while, to try to stop the commentary and the comments of the intellect, surrender to the silence. We could let go of the ego-generated internal-chattering that otherwise fills up our lives, that cacophony of noise that scares away the shy bird waiting to connect us with a state of inspiration.

We need to forget who we are, what we are doing, forget all of our existence, and engage with a world where there is no yesterday and no tomorrow, simply now and forever. And if we do that, and we can escape the bad smells from the abyss, then a wonder may happen, the bird returns and smiles on us – and we can feel the scent of the rose. And in this state of nothingness (or *maqam-i abdiyyah*) "we", who or whatever we are in that moment, can dare to ask her: "What now?" And she will smile and whisper: "Read you own book..."

*'Read - in the name of thy Sustainer, who has created man out of a Germ-Cell!'¹⁵
Read - for thy Sustainer is the Most Bountiful One who has taught [man] the use of
the pen, taught man what he did not know!'
The Ninety-Sixth Surah Al-Alaq (The Germ-Cell) 96/1*

*'Read this thy record! Sufficient is thine own self today to make out thine account!'
The Seventeenth Surah Al-Isra' (The Night Journey) 17/14*

... The fear of the empty book

When we were in London together we visited the Victoria & Albert museum in South Kensington and found ourselves reflecting on the Sufi-psychological meaning of the arts and crafts on display in its collection. We came across a structure, a huge Colonna with stairs around it, leading to an empty platform. And on this empty platform, there was an open book without characters – a book without words. Sadness, a deep sadness, filled our heart for the artist, that he had created this wonderful invitation to ascension and then for there to be nothing there, for the book carved at its top to be without any words. We shared this sadness for a while in silence. Maybe it is the fear of the empty book that leads people not to 'read their

¹⁵ Al-Alaq here is also emphasizing the relational nature of knowing

own book' and instead turn to the books of others. But there is always a book of our own for us to read.

In writing this book there have been two of us, Dr Mustafa Merter, a Sufi seeker for some years, and John, a naïve witness to the Sufi approach to knowing, being and development. He is from the English language and philosophical heartlands. A Londoner, a Business School tutor, an author, and he has struggled as we have worked together – keen as he is to foreground an individual story, create a drama that leads in the end to some satisfying sense of personal growth and resolution. He wants to play to what he expects will sit easily with publishers and the casual reader; his experience is that the more it can be about the story of a character, the ups and downs of life, the engagement with the demons of depression, expulsion from school and how marriage has been the saving of the author, so it'll play well in the English speaking world. For Mustafa there is also the lure of a previous career he had in the world of TV and Broadcasting - and all the opportunities that presents for creating a popular story, that will fit neatly into the schedulers program categories and demographics.

... Finding a different type of story

In John's tradition it is the drama of the individual's struggle that makes a story compelling, but we need to tell a different type of story because this story cannot have any truth if it locates itself within such a tradition.

He has also had to rein himself back from wanting to make our reflections and insights more obvious and certain than they actually are, to strip away their ambiguity and mystery – turn the poetry of the Sufi way into the prose of what passes as practical wisdom in the West. The Sufi way wants to end every sentence with a question mark, a piece of punctuation that points to a world of not knowing, the out-of-reachness that is at the heart of sublime knowledge. It engages with a world where the learning that can come through words has to be supplemented and surpassed by inner experience, movement and felt prayer. His is the world of sound-bites, TED talks and 'closure', where people see the absence of resolution as a failure in the story-telling, not something intrinsic to its worth.

But this is about a different type of story. Who after all cares about "my" story? So many stories have been told since the beginning of time, wrapped up in their own vanity, where the ego traps us into staying with a story of the past – and insists that we have to go on believing and living with it today. But "our story", the story we want

to tell here, is different and has to be approached and told in different ways to those we are used to. This is a story where the content of individual experience isn't that important, but our attitude to experience is. Sufis say that all human hearts are connected with invisible silver wires, silver wires which are like the wind in the line we have already used about the leaf being unable to blow without the winds blowing:

*Surely there is a window from heart to heart:
they are not separate and far from each other.
Two earthenware lamps are not joined,
but their light is mingled as it moves.
No lover seeks union without the beloved seeking;
but the love of lovers makes the body thin as a bowstring,
while the love of loved ones makes them comely and plump.
When the lightning of love for the beloved
has shot into this heart, know that there is love in that heart.
When love for God has been doubled in your heart,
there is no doubt that God has love for you.
[Mevlana Rumi, III, 4391-6]*

For the heart to be moved information must pass along these invisible silver wires and they must be in the right condition for the information to flow. For any information to reach your heart there must be the presence of sincerity and God knows that when the vanity of "I" is present then "I" am not sincere! But the shy bird knows! She can bring us sincerity if we let her and don't drive her away with the bad smell from our egotistical abyss. And what if all of our inspirational birds could communicate and share their story? Then maybe we could learn from them.

This state of sincerity is called "ikhlas" and belongs neither to you or me but exists in the world outside of you and me.

... Bringing news of difference

In engaging with his editorial expectations of what will play well in the English tradition, we have had to work hard to secure our attachment to humility. John has been like a well-meaning demon, tempting me with all sorts of earthly delights if only I will allow myself (and in turn John) to become more figural, more authorial and more authoritative than feels right. He has been a constant provocation and stimulation, a beguiling invitation to puff-up self-importance and ego – and become a rose without a scent.

And this is what life is like at the crossroads of knowledge, when we try to make accessible different traditions to other worlds that have a different history, a different cultural soil for knowledge to live and take root in. The risk is that the act of transfer and assimilation results in the loss of something important, even vital – and this is particularly the case with knowledge that is theological and poetic. The temptation is to deny them both because they are too provocative, they don't translate well, or they lead people into conscious and unconscious rejections of something that is other than they have been brought up to believe is instinctively right.

This news of theological and poetic difference can be readily dismissed when it is felt to be wrong. Moral discernment and judgment are all but impossible to ignore when taking theology seriously, and to engage with another moral tradition can be deeply troubling as you have to explore again much of the headwaters of your life that you have got used to taking for granted.

The 'states' we share with you in this book are subtle, as well as profound, in nature. They do not yield well to the clumsy brutality of 'Google Translate'. They are experiences that cannot be grasped or known with certainty. They are subtle phenomena known more, much more, with the heart than with the cool logic of analysis and intellectual reason.

There will be seemingly paradoxical elements to what you read, moments where we do indeed try to provide you with summaries and textual definitions, where we will sketch out lists of qualities that make up the Sufi way. But our intention is that all these apparent summaries, and definitive definitions, are treated as introductions, invitations for you to go further in, further on and further up into the insights and light they point towards. They are a fire to your curiosity, to something that already exists within you, not a pre-determined path that we know is yours to follow ahead of time.

The metaphor of a crossroads feels important to us; we feel we are reclaiming an ancient piece of the Turkish heritage. For many hundreds of years Turkey has been at the crossroads of East and West, it has been the point of connection between traditions that otherwise live on their own, and has also been the home of its own rich traditions and insights. Such traditions are of course bound to appear when so much of the world's difference comes together, rather than living apart in their separate enclaves and spheres of influence. It is in this fertile and integrative spirit that we want to reconnect the world with the Sufi way, not so it can be absorbed and

disappeared into an amorphous melting point, but so its distinctive contribution to the world can be more widely known.

Part III – Exploring the structures of Sufi being

Chapter 12: Starting with the commanding Nafs (also called the base or tyrannical self)

Chapter 13: Embracing 'over-specification' and the feminine principle

Chapter 14: The third Nafs level, the Inspired Nafs

12. Starting with the commanding *nafs* (also called the base or tyrannical self)

The Sufi way sees human psychology as developing and ascending through a series of forms of consciousness; we have written loosely in this book of the notion of the self, in order to make it accessible to people who have been brought up in cultures where the ego-centered self is seen as the center of being – and which is seen to have a more or less concrete reality.

Sufi psychology sees the world of the self as being made up of multilevel structures of consciousness, which are not things or entities, but existential potentials given by the Creator to all humanity. An analogy would be the waves created when we throw a stone into a pond and see seemingly separate concentric waves following one another. In reality every wave is a cross-section of an invisible sphere and each sphere is connected to the other spheres, intersecting with the one that went before and the one that comes after. As we ascend and descend through these levels we experience changes in the senses that are associated with them, how we notice and experience the world changes, as do the feelings we find ourselves able to express and connect with.

... The ego bound identity we start from

The basic starting level for every human being is that of the commanding self (or *nafs-e ammara*). At this first level we are at our most ego bound, which means that we have a deeply felt awareness of ourselves as a separate being, fueled by desire or what Freud would call libido. In these lower levels of *nafs*, thoughts, feelings, senses and bodily sensations concentrate around a center like droplets of oil on the surface of water. This concentration gives us the awareness of ourselves as a separate being, which is necessary at the beginning of life, to support our personal survival and that of the human species. It may be necessary for a while, but is essentially insufficient.

But at the very core of this essentially insufficient self-structure we also have a connection with our Real and universal self, or *Djan*. An extensive body of Sufi literature explains with analogies this structure and its hidden dynamism, for example:

Body is not veiled from soul (Djan), nor soul from body, yet none is permitted to see the soul (Djan)

(Mevlana Rumi -ks-, Mathnawi, Nicholson, Band I, verse 8)

What in these verses has been translated as soul is the Persian word Djan. Djan, also mentioned in some texts as ruh or spirit, is the emanation (the tajalli) of Allah's attribute of "Life", or al Hayy, in different existential levels (mertebe). The power of this emanation depends on the receptivity at this level. It is generally accepted that every human being has this highest human potential, Djan (Aziz Nasafi). Kaynak/
Source

*If your fancy you has a "before" and "behind," you art tied
to body and deprived of spirit (Djan)
"Below" and "above," "before" and "behind" are attributes of
the body: the essence of the bright spirit (Djan) is without direction
(not limited by relations of place).
Open thy (inward) vision with the pure light of the King.
Beware of fancying, like one who is short-sighted,
(Mevlana Rumi -ks-, Mathnawi, Nicholson, Band I, 2007-8-9)*

Mevlana Rumi (ks) explains also this highest human potential with the symbolism of the inner Jesus Christ:

*Do not grieve for your eye when that Jesus is yours
(Jesus here is a symbol of Djan); do not go to the left (but to the right),
that he may give you two right (sound) eyes.
450. The Jesus of your spirit is present with you: beg aid from
him, for he is a goodly aider;
(Mevlana Rumi -ks-, Mathnawi, Nicholson, Band II, 449-50)*

Another symbol is that of the hidden pearl:

*1395. What pearl? (Nay), the Sea hidden in a drop, a Sun
concealed in a mote.
A Sun showed itself as a mote, and little by little uncovered
its face.
(Mevlana Rumi -ks-, Mathnawi, Nicholson, Band II 1395-6)*

When we first have a glimpse of this Real Self potential or Djan, it's like the dim light of veiled moonshine, perceived through dark clouds, a dim light so it doesn't overwhelm us after so much time in the darkness. It is the most marvelous, but also

most indescribable, experience. It can be pointed towards by bringing to mind the universal human experience of the smiling between a newborn and its mother.

The mother reflects from her heart mirror to the baby, its unique perfection, the Djan. That call and response of unconditional love, where the loved and the loving merge into an indivisible whole, where the state of loving exists outside of any consideration of beginnings, middles and ends. It is an experience that is outside time.

What Heinz Kohut noticed in the mirror reflection of the grandiose Self could correspond to this first experience, although he thinks that the grandiose Self is only an image in the child's mind. Through our whole life we have a longing to be this primordial pure Self. But this pureness, this light being, is only the basis on which to build the future Perfect Self. The Perfect Self of a realized person (Murshid-e Kamil) is more than a baby's grandiose Self.

At the heart of this first experience of exposure to the Real Self, is a profound reorientation, away from an inward looking and centripetal pattern of serving the ego and the self, towards an outward looking, centrifugal Real Self level and orientation – with a focus on serving humanity and the world.

... Knowing and trusting to a guiding light

In the picture below, Polynesian travelers are shown searching for an island. It was a custom on an overcrowded island to choose a group of young couples and, after feeding them for a couple of months, to set them off on a boat to find their own island. Imagine the almost endless Pacific Ocean and the chance of finding an island. But our "all compassionate Lord of all Universes" (Rahman, Rabb'ul Alemin) helps them in an unpredictable way. When the front edge of their craft touches the sea, the sea sparkles revealing lines of light that have been carried by a streaming current from where they have come from. So they follow the light in the sea and reach their own life saving island.



At the most basic level you can imagine the ego-bound, commanding nafs as the consciousness of the boat people going off course in a vast and boundless ocean without knowledge of the guiding light, which is always present if they could be allowed to see it.

And He it is who has set up for you the stars so that you might be guided by them in the midst of the deep darkness of land and sea: clearly, indeed, have We spelled out these messages unto people of [innate] knowledge!

The Sixth Surah Al-An'am (Cattle) 6/97

This resonates with the taken for granted assumption of the left alone and isolated individual which dominates most Western thinking. The self is seen as solitary, apart from the All Merciful Creator and this lonely sense of being is dominated by two existential states – those of existential anxiety (hawf) and existential hope (rajha). As long as we don't perceive this guiding light in the dark ocean of our directionless existence, so we are besieged by this basic existential anxiety.

[and] who are impelled to rise from their beds [at night] to call out to their Sustainer in fear and hope; and who spend on others out of what We provide for them as sustenance.

The Thirty-Second Surah As-Sajdah (Prostration) 32/16

Within most modern Western life, it is existential anxiety that is most noticed and reported on, because of our established cultural habits of ignoring the saving light in this ocean of existence. We are like Odysseus forever losing his course in the ocean, never finding his Ithaca, forgetting that Ithaca ever existed.

Our century is even called by some 'The Age of Anxiety'. Dread in the face of our frailty, limitations and our isolation. The Freudian inspired civilization of the West has inspired us to see the world as loveless, evil and chaotic and we take this pseudo-reality as the absolute truth of the human condition. What a paradox it is that in Freudian pseudo-logic, this guiding light is labelled and dismissed as regression or belittled as oceanic feeling.

But in spite of all these confusing thoughts, when we still raise our head and look around, we see the light and the almost lost hope appears again (the basic existential experience of hope or redja).

... Hope starts by letting go of the fantasy of isolation

The block to us raising our head to look up comes also from the widely shared ignorance of the upper levels of human existence and the possibilities of upward progression and development. We are burdened by our isolation; the impossible sense that even if we were to have a sense of these upper levels, we would have to make this upward progression on our own, haunted by the hopelessness of existential anxiety.

The point at which development begins is when that belief in being an isolated voyager disappears, when we re-establish the connection again with the guiding light, al Hadi (All Merciful Creator who guides every creature to that which is needed for its existence. Most Beautiful Names, Compiled by Sheik Tosun Bayrak al Jerrahi al Halveti, Threshold 1985).

[But when God's message was conveyed unto Pharaoh,] he said: "Who, now, is this Sustainer of you two, O Moses?" (20:50) He replied: "Our Sustainer is He who gives unto everything [that exists] its true nature and form and thereupon guides it [towards its fulfilment].

The Twentieth Surah Ta Ha (O Man) 20/50

So when we raise our heads up from our isolated, lost existence and are confronted with the heavenly light, then we realize the insignificance of our isolated existence

compared to this endless universe. This re-evaluation of coordinates, the recalibration in our perspective, brings a deep humbleness and the desire to be part of this endlessness. Our beloved boat, which has defined the boundaries of what we thought to be real, becomes less important and we surrender to the light and follow its route to discover successive life-supporting islands (different levels of nafs). This surrendering is not annihilation but the beginning of a voyage towards ultimate freedom; the embrace of the longing we have always carried in our heart, however secretly and deeply hidden.

... Embracing connected reflection (Tafakkur)¹⁶

When we start to evolve through this first level of the psyche, the nafs-e ammarah, so our ability to reflect also deepens; the levels of consciousness evolve with the experience of being able to notice ourselves and the world with attention, and with qualities of attention not previously available to us.

Still on the level of the commanding Self (nafs-e ammarah) this reflecting psyche is called in Arabic, nafs-e darrake. The word "darrake" coming from the root d-r-k that means the rope of a well bucket (Source: Ragheeb al Esfahani Mufredat). So if we follow this rope we will reach the well of wisdom, which is our heart. It sounds strange, but this heart is not mine or yours but ours; this is an attentive knowing which is becoming free of the self-serving centripetal demands of the ego-bound identity. Deliciously the Latin origins of the word reflection speak of reflecting being about 'throwing or bending back'... to reflect speaks to both casting something forward, while also bending back to see what has gone past. For us this connects to the idea that as we step beyond the confines of our isolated individualism, we enter the universal dimension of wisdom, the timeless common good of all humanity.

During the 1960s and '70s this embracing of connection became associated with many New Age practices, with people experimenting with and reporting on out-of-body experiences, encounters with what was called in the language of the time, astral planes; people became conscious of the potential for knowing the world beyond the boundaries of the narrowly defined ego and self.

¹⁶ "Tafakkur" literally means to think on a subject deeply, systematically, and in great detail. The word comes from the root, f-k-r and the first meaning is the power that brings knowing towards known. Another meaning related to this root is "polishing" (Ragheeb al Esfahani, Mufredat).

Meanwhile Robert Frager, one of the founders of the Transpersonal Psychology movement spoke with humor in an interview in the Enlightenment Magazine¹⁷, of us metaphorically becoming two headed beings, which meant we now had the awareness that we had access to an upper level of consciousness, from where we could notice our lower level.

This upper level gave us the capacity to sit in the balcony of the theatre of our lives and see what was happening on the stage we were acting out on. This seeing drew on all of our basic, innate human wisdom, which allowed us to see consciously what was going on, while drawing on the rationality of the mind and heart simultaneously. We can see the play, we can analyze it, we can criticize it and we can love it all at the same time.

We explore this in more depth in the following chapter, but for now play with that sense of the Divine Light of where we've been flitting out across the ocean that is still mostly dark and without obvious direction.

... Dreams which free us from the commanding nafs

At this point we could ask ourselves how it is possible to change this imprisonment, this tyranny of the commanding nafs. The answer comes from the smiling face of Mawlana Rumi (ks), sitting in the rose garden in Konya, under the most beautiful moonshine we could ever imagine:

Oh you who have devoted yourself to strife,
you have not discerned yourself from others!
Whenever you come upon a form,
you stop and say, "I am this."
By God, you are not that! . . .
How can you be that?
You are that unique one, happy, beautiful,
and intoxicated with yourself.
You are your own bird, prey, and snare,
your own seat of honor, carpet, and roof.
"Substance" subsists in itself,
those things that derive from it are accidents.
If you are born of Adam,

¹⁷ Interview by Craig Hamilton, 15th March 2006

sit like him and behold his progeny within yourself.
What does the vat contain that is not in the river?
What does the room encompass that is not in the city?
This world is the vat, and the heart the running stream,
this world the room, and the heart the city of wonders.

— Jalalud'din Rumi – Mathnawi IV: 803-811 – “The Sufi Path of Love” (transl. William C. Chittick)

The world is a prison and we are the prisoners: dig a hole in the prison and let yourself out!

Water in the boat is the ruin of the boat, but water under the boat is its support. Since Solomon cast the desire for wealth out from his heart, he didn't call himself by any name but "poor". The stoppered jar, though in rough water, floated because of its empty heart. When the wind of poverty is in anyone, she floats in peace on the waters of this world.

The light which shines in the eye is really the light of the heart. The light which fills the heart is the light of God, which is pure and separate from the light of intellect and sense.

The verses of Mathnawi (To be added)

As we have mentioned before, some dreams we have are experienced by the person who is on the stage and are the materials our stage self has to reflect on, as we also sit in the seats looking down at our current performance.

The dream provides us with a message that our hearts then have to read and if they have resonance, then we will experience a change in state. If we are able to assimilate the message, then we will feel wise and free. The dream changes us if our heart is open and once we are changed then new levels of consciousness open up and are known to us.

It is as if an invisible door opens to free us from the prison cell of the commanding nafs. Through the interpretation of the dream we have access to our heart and we experience new levels of consciousness. So the dream changes us if our rationality is combined with the wisdom of our heart. Then we will experience a change in state, like the awakening of hope, trust, freedom, love or compassion. And this change in state has a long lasting effect, especially if we work through the dream message.

These dreams from Us to us are corrective, reparative dreams. Other dreams are pure divine inspirations, like the dreams of Prophets and Saints, revelations and beyond our comprehension.

.... Dreaming of tombstones can be good news

Some years ago I was working with a young man and he brought me a dream. The dream began with him having a car accident at the top of a hill, overlooking a village. The car was badly damaged and unable to be driven any further, the dreamer was surprised to find he was capable of moving at all – never mind walking down into the village. When he got there, still surprisingly unshaken by the crash, he came to the graveyard and went into it – there he saw a tombstone, and not just any tombstone, but one that quite unmistakably had his name on it.

At this point in our analytical conversation I expected my youthful client to report a sense of anxiety, these unexpectedly early encounters with mortality are even harder to embrace than for those of us of more advanced years. I asked him how he felt, how anxious this solid message of death made him feel.

'But I don't feel anxious,' he said, in response to my very leading question about his anxiety.

'I feel good!'

This dream could be an example of a message coming from his True Self or Djan. That symbolic death is a necessity of life; as a matter of fact when we come to the end of one role in our life, so that role needs to die so that a new aspiration, a new level of consciousness can be given the opportunity to take root and grow. My client's response to his dream message shows how easy it is to hear dreams when you imagine them as coming from a very loving teacher, who is sending you a letter, or even from a loving mother. If the letter/dream is from a consciousness such as this, then will they want you to be anxious? Or do they want you to feel something else? In the case of my young client this was a loving message for him, to let go of how he had known himself so far in his life. It was time for him to step into a new play, a new role, a new level of consciousness.

... Everything is sent to you with love

When I was explaining this to John I found it hard to express the intensity of feeling this story evoked in me. I had told him this story to bring out how we are partly our own guide through this journey of the levels of the nafs; how everything that is sent to

us is sent to us with love. It is hard when a person is still at the level of the commanding nafs to comprehend that there is a loving universe, that love is available to everyone and that all dreams are coming from a positive place, with a positive intention. The higher levels of human existence informed by the higher unconscious is a loving universe where pure love reigns, whereas the lower unconscious is human experience dominated by separateness and dread.

... Making sense of suffering

But then what is suffering, how do we engage with all the pain and misery we see around us? Especially nowadays in the less developed world and in the migration crisis currently engulfing Europe and the Middle East. Instinctively I have no doubt about the truth of the essential goodness in the world, but some more explanations are needed for the reader. First of all we have to consider the following verses of the Holy Quran

"God does not burden any human being with more than he is well able to bear: in his favor shall be whatever good he does, and against him whatever evil he does. "O our Sustainer! Take us not to task if we forget or unwittingly do wrong! "O our Sustainer! Lay not upon us a burden such as Thou didst lay upon those who lived before us! [278] O our Sustainer! Make us not bear burdens which we have no strength to bear! "And efface Thou our sins, and grant us forgiveness, and bestow Thy mercy upon us! Thou art our Lord Supreme: succor us, then, against people who deny the truth!"

We know that there is a limit for physical suffering, after a certain degree we faint. Fainting is an inborn capacity for controlling the amount of pain we experience. There is also a tolerance limit for psychological suffering, let me give some examples.

As a medical doctor I worked during my early years in an intensive care unit in Germany. One night when I was on duty I had a sad experience. A thirty-four year old woman was brought in with a heart attack, accompanied by her husband and her two children, a girl of five and a boy of seven. Shortly after the hospitalisation she had a cardiac arrest and we had to resuscitate her. As there is always a danger of another attack, I spent all night near to the intensive care unit, walking around the corridors and reflecting more generally on human misery. I was deeply saddened for this family and the future of the children.

Then there started a dialog with my God about the justness of His deeds. Just before sunrise I felt the inner voice ask me the following:

‘What do you know about the amount of their suffering?’

My inner dialogue continued as I considered that our knowledge of the suffering of others is a subjective experience and we really don't know the objective reality. This doesn't mean that we should simply accept the reality of suffering and be passive in our engagement with it. On the contrary, as we are vicegerents of God in this life (Holy Quran Bakara 30), we are invited to do all that is possible to bring relief to those that are suffering.

Later in my life I was also confronted with all kinds of human misery, during my psychiatric practice, while serving in Africa and after the great earthquake in Turkey. I was always astonished to see how our all compassionate Lord of all Heavens was present in human suffering. Forgive me for this audacity but I think He suffers more than we do.

... How our experience of suffering evolves as we ascend

So the question is what happens to the human suffering when we ascend through the nafs levels? We know that whatever level we reach a certain suffering is always there. Even the Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) when He lost His son Ibrahim had tears in His eyes and was deeply sad. Some of the Followers made reference to His advice of not mourning excessively. His answer was: ‘Shouldn't I be a suffering father? I have only told you not to mourn loudly and excessively.’

But the quality of the suffering must still be different on the higher levels, because of the special dynamics of these levels. First of all, as we have gained distance from our lower unconscious, we project less of our own misery onto the world. Then through our increased closeness to God (yaqeen) we experience states such as patience (sabr), resilience (tawakkul), trust (itminan) and forbearance (tavfeez). One of these states is essential to the higher levels of human development and is called "Unity Consciousness" (tawheed), which is at the heart of the Sufi wisdom.

If human worldly suffering comes from egocentric desire, and if desire is related to the disintegration of the Primary Perfect Oneness (the holy name "Ahad") into divisions or duality of worldly existence, what happens then when all the duality is wiped out and only God exists?

The almost magic mantra, that "there are no divinities but only one God" (la ilaha illallah) points to this ultimate reality - and whenever the tongue says "la ilaha illallah" the heart should repeat "Mohammed-er Rasulullah". Experiencing Unity

Consciousness could be compared to a raindrop, falling in the endless ocean, of divine Oneness. If the drop would then say, 'I am the ocean', would it be a lie? Embracing and knowing how to see unity in the seeming paradox of opposites can only be accepted if we consider it from another dimension. As the great Sufi of 13th century Yunus Emre (ks) whispers to us:

*I am not contented by the positive existence nor sorrowed by the negative but... I
"laugh" about them (free translation by the author).*

and

*I hear a voice from the mosque saying, "Yunus is dead"...
animals die, but true lovers of God never die*

... Being in the instant

This incredible, all but indescribable, sight of seeing the world in which we exist from another dimension might come from the fact that ascending through the nafs levels brings with it a progressive freedom from the regular sense of time and space. The more we are attached to our ego the more we are captured in a serial and horizontal flow of time, going from yesterday to today and on from today to tomorrow. But there is another dimension of time, vertical time that is hidden in the instant. Sufis call the person mastering the wisdom of the instant the son of the instant (Ibn ul wakt).

Being the son or daughter of the instant is to see the perfection that Osman Effendi taught us. And as you know in perfection there can be no dualism. Being freed from this time and space bound consciousness is the beginning of identification with our Almighty and Compassionate Lord of all Heavens and we become divine beings with divine senses.

Allah (The Glorified and the Exalted) says, When a servant of Mine approaches Me through the medium of that which I like best, out of what I have declared obligatory for him, and continues to advance towards Me through optional prayers (Nawafil)¹⁸, then I begin to love him. When I make him My beloved, I become his ears to hear,

¹⁸ "Optional prayers" means, beyond the regular 5 times a day prayers (which is an obligation to Muslims), other additional prayers, fasting (not only in Ramadan), Dhikr (repeating in prescribed numbers the Holy Names of God), tafakkur, (deep thinking), recitation and compassionate service towards all existence.

*and his eyes to see and his hands to grasp, and his feet to walk. When he asks Me, I
grant him and when he seeks My protection I protect him
(Bukhari Hadith Qudsi)*

This Holy Saying explains the mystery of annihilation (fana'), which is one of the high states of Sufi realization. When there is no longer an ego and only God exists what meaning can there be in having individual desires, which are at the center of our suffering? And we had better stop here with our claims of wisdom, I am conscious of the bird on my head getting ready to fly away.

Being in contact with the instant is very important in Sufi psychology. If we slow the haste of our rushing existence, fueled with egocentric desires, we experience the state of equanimity, "tamqin". The word comes from the root m-q-n, meaning a space where something is contained. Our rationality moves into the background and our experience of the world and the wonderful gates of our heart open. The heart, we could compare with the dish of an antenna, receiving the signs that were always there but blurred through our rationality. Let me give an example.

The tremendous power of the instant plays out in an encounter I witnessed in my hometown of Bodrum, in Turkey, and told to John. It involved a Turkish Shepherd dog, Aslan. I was in the habit of giving food to this dog and often when I fed him a local cat would sneak in and steal the food. The floor where I put the food out was made up of ceramic tiles and this meant that the dog couldn't get enough of a grip, fast enough, to catch up with the cat. I admit to finding the situation really quite funny, it had many of the qualities of a children's cartoon with the dog scrabbling like crazy, while the cat casually got away without seeming to put a hair out of place. I looked forward to their daily encounters in the same way I looked forward to Tom and Jerry cartoons when I was a child!

Then one day the dog caught the cat; whether it was because the cat had become over-confident, or the dog had learnt how to get its grip faster, or simply got lucky, I don't know. But the result was horrible; the dog took the cat in its jaws, twisted the animal and threw it to the ground, breaking its back. And then I focused on their gaze; the way that the cat gazed at the dog was very strange, there was something – some expression of connection - happening between them. I have no words to describe this but at the moment I write these words, I have tears in my eyes. I can know the feeling in my heart, not through the logic of my mind. The only word that comes to me is love, a lovely request to finish the suffering. The time stopped and we

were in another dimension. Then Aslan responded to the loving request, once more taking the cat into his mouth and hurling it high into the air, killing it.

The scene was of course very sad but there was a very deep teaching in the encounter. But what then happened is even stranger. Some days later, I brought Aslan to the tangerine garden my wife and I own in Bodrum, so he could have some more freedom to run around. I was talking with someone and at first didn't realize what was happening. Then I saw with great dread that a young cat was approaching Aslan as a friend – without fear. The cat was too close to the dog for me to act and anything I shouted would only make the situation more perilous. I thought the same thing would happen as with the other cat back in the kitchen. I held my breath in fear, but the all Merciful Lord of All Heavens had something else in mind and instead a wonder happened! The cat rubbed itself up against Aslan and the dog gave the young cat a leisurely lick. Then Aslan turned around looked deep and wisely into my eyes, saying through his gaze: 'Look Mustafa, I am not a racist. I don't hate all cats, the entire species of cats. I only act against them to defend my food.'

... The transitory nature of peak experiences at the level of the commanding *nafs*

When we know ourselves, and the world, at these lower levels of consciousness we are still capable of knowing with great intensity and wisdom. At these lower levels of consciousness our regular, habitual knowing is blurred and it is as if we are in a waked dream state

"Human beings are asleep, when they die they wake up"...
(Holy Saying of Prophet Mohammad)

... Seeing through the lens of the heart

But the story of wise Aslan and the peak experiences it initiated in me suggests that even on the lower levels of *nafs* we are confronted with wondrous lessons. Every encounter has a secret meaning and nothing is random. If even sporadically, we can see through our hearts lens and experience an incredible universe, states of amazement and wonder fills our being.

The heart lens is very sensible to outer influences and there are three main hindrances that blur the lens. Firstly, excess activity of the lower unconscious that can be seen in libido driven activities such as greed, unpermitted sexuality, pride and

anger. Secondly there is the covering of the heart lens through alcohol, drugs or psycho-stimulants; the Quranic word "hamr" which is generally translated as wine has as its first meaning that of covering. The third negative influence is excessive rational activity of any kind.

Nowadays the excessive preoccupation with virtual reality is, after being stuck in the levels of the Commanding self, the biggest danger for our heart vision. I have explained in further detail the Matrix Syndrome in my previous book on Nafs Psychology. The ignorance in modern psychology of the heart dimension of human nature makes us under-estimate this syndrome. Virtual reality, or non-reality, gets in the way of us being in touch with the signs of God, the ayahs of the universe around us and the ayahs in our selves, and consequently stops us experiencing states that are vital to our development.

The world loses its color in comparison to that of virtual reality, and the reality of the world becomes grey. The price we pay for this is depression, anxiety and narcissism as we lose our connection to these subtle states of wonderment and amazement, which are the gift of the Universal God (Rabb'ul Alemin) to all humanity and give meaning to our existence. We absolutely need them, otherwise we are condemned to suffer; a suffering that is present to a very high degree among all sensitive people, especially poets and philosophers.

... A history of failed attempts to reach out to our higher dimensions

The hidden motivation behind the last 300 years of European philosophy and psychology is the effort to overcome this malaise de siècle, sickness of the age. We can follow though Henry F. Ellenberger's monumental work *The Discovery of The Unconscious* this tragic evolution. The Renaissance, Baroque, Enlightenment and Romantics, all these creative periods of human history represented an intensive search.

For the Renaissance, the hope was that a new rebirth could be realized through embracing the origins of European civilization as found in ancient Greece and Rome. In the Baroque period the hope was placed in the saving father, typified by figures such as the Sun King himself - Louis XIV of France. The Enlightenment saw people take refuge in the intellect, while the Romantic era, which is where we can situate the discovery of the unconscious, came about as a reaction to the Enlightenment and saw a return to the inner mysteries of human nature and experience.

It is striking that all the great fathers of philosophy and psychology have been considered by the masses who followed them as prophets. About 10 years ago I assisted at the World Psychotherapy Congress in Vienna where one of the lecturers was Sophie Freud, granddaughter of Sigmund. The title of her presentation was Fake Prophets, by which she meant her grandfather.

From the viewpoint of Nafs Psychology all these efforts are attempts to find a vertical breakthrough (the state of *falah*) towards the higher human dimensions. But how can a breakthrough be possible when psychology ignores these higher levels of our psychic reality? All these vain efforts ended, in the last analysis, unfortunately with depression and/or addiction. The patho-biographies of these great people are very sad.

There is Arthur Schopenhauer *On The Vanity Of Existence* in which the vanity of existence is revealed in the whole form existence assumes: in the infiniteness of time and space contrasted with the finiteness of the individual in both; in the fleeting present as the sole form in which actuality exists; in the contingency and relativity of all things; in continual becoming without being; in ceaseless desire without satisfaction; in the endless frustration of striving of which life consists.

Sufi understanding accepts that the finiteness of the individual is absolutely true, but only for the first existential level (commanding self), the response of our beloved Mevlana Rumi can be seen in these verses:

3095. *(The realm of) phantasies is narrower than nonexistence (potential existence):
on that account phantasy is
the cause of pain.*

*(The realm of actual) existence, again, was (ever) narrower
than (the realm of) phantasy: hence in it moons become like
the moon that has waned.*

*Again, the existence of the world of sense and colour is
narrower (than this), for 'tis a narrow prison.*

*The cause of narrowness is composition (compoundness) and
number (plurality): the senses are moving towards
composition.*

2640. *I do not look at the cause which is
temporal, inasmuch as the temporal (only) produces
something temporal (like itself).*

*I am regarding (His eternally) precedent mercy: whatsoever is
temporal I rend in twain.*

*Grant that my declining to worship (Adam) was from envy;
(yet) that envy arises from love (of God), not from denial (of
obedience to His command).*

*'Tis certain, all envy arises from love, (for fear) lest another
become the companion of the beloved*

... The grip and consequence of stuck consciousness

Let me give another example from Schopenhauer and the consequence of his stuck consciousness. In *Parerga and Paralipomena* there is this dialogue between him and the flower:

*You are stupid (says the flower); do you think that I flourish for you? No, I only
flourish for myself
(Author's translation)*

What a tragic loneliness when the heart lens is blurred, not only by Schopenhauer, but by Camus and Kierkegaard with their absurdity of the existence. They are the tragic exemplars of this stuck existential imprisonment. Suicide, leap of faith or fear of trembling until death speak to what is covered by Kierkegaard's two main works, while Sartre's existential nihilism is only one ring of this long chain. William Shakespeare eloquently summarized the existential nihilist's perspective through Macbeth's mindset at the end of the play where to go on is as tedious as to return. Yeats with powerful eloquence captures the hopeless nihilism in his 1920 poem:

*Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned.
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.*

From where does all this pessimism come from? Nafs Psychology says from the limited vision of our first existential level. Without experiencing the subtle states of

the higher nafs levels we are condemned to a grey, unsalted world. What these philosophers and poets most lack is access to the states of wonder and amazement, those momentary flashes of transcendence in an otherwise non-transcendent philosophy, a break-through in the walls of our existential prison.

(INSERT - Mawlana Verses about amazement)

... Sustaining an encounter with the transcendental

Although even on the lowers of nafs we receive these transcendental glimpses, if we don't take care of them, they rapidly fade away. The continuation of these subtle, divine states depends on our behavior, how we change our lives after we receive all these lessons. How we protect our individual ecology and treat with care our level of consciousness and how it informs our heartfelt knowledge.

This breakthrough, or in Kierkegaard's language existential leap, is the state of "falah". What we hear 5 times a day from the mosque, during the call to prayer...

Hayyal al Falah...

... means come to the existential leap and experience during your prostration (putting the head front on the floor) the highest human Oneness with your all Compassionate Creator of all Heavens...

*Prostration (sajdah) is the believers ascension (merajh)
(Holy Saying of Prophet Mohammed -pbuh-)*



Chapter 13. Embracing ‘over-spection’ and the feminine principle

As we have described earlier and touched on throughout the book, the image of “two-headedness” speaks to a capacity we have to develop in our reflective skills. As with all things connected with Sufi psychology, this is not about acquiring something new, but paying attention to an ability that already lies within us – however dormant. We always exist with a skill to be both people who act and people who can see themselves act, and as we ascend and grow into fuller hope and connection so we can pay attention to how we are acting as we observe the action of our less reflective self.

One of the most amazing facts about nafs psychology is being able to see what is going on, on the previous level where we acted before - exactly like someone observing a theatre play from the balcony, the actor on the stage is himself but at the same time the observer. We find it useful to think of this as an experience of ‘over-spection’, rather than ‘introspection’, we have an experience of being other to ourselves rather than simply seeing ourselves through our already given sense of self. It is as if we have two identities, co-existing and inseparable – while also being quite distinct.

The Sufi expression for this ability is “feraset”. The original meaning of the word is the art of educating/taming of a horse, the root f-r-r meaning to examine the teeth of a horse (Ragheeb el Isfahani). So the rider on the metaphorical horse of the commanding nafs has control over his horse and his vision is no longer distracted by the silliness of the horse! With a smile on his face, the rider says: ‘Yes! I have a strong horse, but “I” am not only this horse’ (with all due respect to our horse brothers and sisters!)

This is a typical Sufi explanation, which brings together and holds two seemingly contradictory notions – of being able to see yourself with a self that is you, but not the you you’ve known so far in your life. The more we evolve in this sense the more our skill becomes accurate and auto-correction becomes possible.

But this ‘over-spective’ vision is, like many of the Sufi qualities, subtle and easily put to flight. And the quality that most easily puts it to flight is our ego of the level of the commanding nafs. As the renowned Robert Frager spoke of in the interview we referenced earlier: “The ego, or nafs, is scared of change, scared to death of deep mystical experience and transformation, because from its point of view, that kind of

change is death. ... It is the part of all of us that wants to stay the same, a kind of inertial component ... that says, 'Don't change'."

In writing this book we also have tried to be been conscious of our ego and its desire to claim authority and knowledge of the Sufi tradition. What gives us the right to claim some form of definitive wisdom and to put it into words? Especially when that tradition is doubtful as to what can be put into words and they are the plain words of explanation rather than the beautiful and all encompassing potential that exists in poetry. Especially when the words are insufficient to express the states experienced.

For John as an editor the lure of his ego was more obvious. As he worked with me his eyes would light up when I used a particular phrase or made a particular claim for what the Sufi tradition invites. As I first wrote, the phrase 'makes possible' rather than 'invites' came to my keyboard – an invitation assumes that what is needed already exists within the person and so doesn't make a claim for causality. Whereas 'makes possible' gives an instrumental agency to the Sufi tradition which is at odds with one of its core strands of wisdom, that the ascension through the nafs is a self-discovered path. His editorial ego has an eye on what will make this book attractive to the buying public, what will appeal to a world which wants to hear about something 'other', while not feeling too threatened by it.

This ego-self (commanding nafs level) is not a fixed experience; it changes its way of being as a person ascends through the nafs. The ego of the commanding nafs is different from the "ego" that appears at the higher stages of development – and one of the most derailing features of the higher stage ego is its belief that the work of development has been completed. The 900th floor has been reached, so surely there must be no more floors to climb! And yet there will always be new floors to reach for, much as with the Jungian tradition where there are always new cellars to be found as you descend into the archaeology of the lower unconscious. But, as is symbolically said, hell has its Seven stages (dereke) while paradise has Eight (dereja).

'Over-spection' evolves as we progress with our development and at each stage of development our "two-headedness" needs time to acquire its new form. The over-spection ability that allows a person to develop through the commanding nafs is not the same one that will support them in their development through the higher nafs levels. At each stage a new form of transcendent vision will have to start from the beginning, there is no universal template that can be imported from one stage and applied to the next. Each individual will need to learn their new form, let it grow through its infancy, into maturity and then into old age and death so that the next

form of vision can begin to emerge. And what these new forms will be cannot be known ahead of time.

Many traditions provide comfort to their adherents by promising some pre-known form of practice that can apply throughout their lives. The Sufi tradition sees the practice of spiritual ascent as something that is in constant evolution, where what will be right for the higher levels cannot be known ahead of time. All that is known is that all of us hold within us the capacity for sending and receiving loving messages that will help us create the two-headedness we need.

... A parallel with a medieval Christian tradition

John comes from the Judeo-Christian tradition and so will often try and anchor what I am saying within the context of perspectives he is more familiar with – which gives him a foothold for understanding and then for reaching out beyond what he allows himself to already know.

The text he has talked to on a number of occasions with me is ‘The Cloud of Unknowing’, which describes a particular Christian take on encountering God. The text describes encounters with God as being like walking up a mountain and then entering a bank of thick cloud into which the believer must walk alone. The priests and bishops, the formal authorities of the Church, can take the believer to the edge of the cloud, but the experience of being in the cloud is something that the believer has to have without the support of others. The encounter with God is a personal encounter that cannot be mediated by another.

I find this a useful jumping off point for exploring what is different about the Sufi tradition. Firstly the Sufi perspective doesn’t see development as being this one-off encounter; there isn’t just one mountain. Once you have entered the fog of what appears to be a single mountain, if you are successful in finding your development path, then you will break through the fog and find another mountain beyond, which will also have its banks of cloud to be entered into in due course.

Secondly you are not alone when you enter the cloud; you have your Real Self or Djan potential and you have within you a sense of already knowing what it is you need to know – it is less of an encounter with something secret, wild and utterly beyond experience, and more of an awakening, a reconnection with that which you have set yourself apart from. Last but not least, the most powerful guarantee for not getting lost in this cloud is the loving presence of the Mursheed. Like a supreme

conductor of the orchestra, he frames your defective melodies into an oratorio of divine quality.

... Further reflexions on being a two-headed, over-spective human being

We have written very rationally in describing this experience, but as with all things Sufi, being a two-headed human being is heartfelt experience – it is felt, not explained. One of the definitions of Sufism is that Sufism is not a "words" science (ilm-u khal) but a science of subtle states (ilm-u hal). We could also use the metaphor of twin brothers, where the twin in the upper balcony (knowing the world from the higher position) in time takes control of his brother on the lower stage, managing his actions, feelings and thoughts. The higher twin is an active teacher, who in turn has to retain his modesty and not fall into the trap of thinking that he knows everything.

The communication between the two brothers is both active and subtle, entwined with deep symbols. As the person who exists with "two heads" it is very easy to interpret what the higher twin is saying in a way that sits easily with the established patterns of being the lower twin. To hear your higher twin you have to admit that 99% of your motivation is coming from the personal frame of the lower twin, that it is self-serving – and if God will allow, maybe 1% is possibly free of this narcissism.

... Being in a fit state to hear messages

As part of a group of medical doctors, I was working in Africa when a recurring dream changed shape. For a while, before I'd gone there, I'd been presented with this dream-image of a woman, but I was unable to see her face. When I tried to make meaning from her image, I could feel her as being the all-compassionate feminine, wise and strong, but she wouldn't show herself to me – and she was keeping herself at a distance. Our higher Self or Djan or our twin sister in the upper realms of the nafs structure doesn't show her incredibly beautiful face to us on every occasion¹⁹.

We have a lot of dreams of female symbols or "anima" as they are called by Jungian psychology. The all-compassionate feminine symbol is very important for a harsh, uncompassionate egocentric, narcissistic, primitive man like me. Because She awakes in me all the hidden, dormant and un-experienced potentials. Without being

¹⁹ The 13th century Great Sufi Ahmad Badawi -qs- (1200-1276) used to walk around with a veil on his face. One of his mureeds (disciples) wanted to see his Master's face. But the Sheikh didn't allow him, saying that he could not tolerate or stand this sight. The mureed insisted and at the end He permitted the vision. The mureed fell down with a shout and died. Every human being has this innate potential and deserves the corresponding respect.

able to live these potentials, as Ibn Arabi (ks) metaphorically explains, I am like a man holding his breath to death.

Then came my arrival into Africa and my practical engagement with doing work that was in the service of the local community, setting up a hospital, this created the space within in me to know her differently. At the very beginning of our work the following dream, or love letter, was sent to me. In it a wise, old and very beautiful woman stood like a light being before me, smiling. In front of her two black leopards sat and gazed at me. Their heads were huge, their eyes so impressive....



I dared to caress one of them on his head, even while his mouth was wide open and his strong, sharp and powerful teeth ever present. This dream changed all my doubts and fears about the hard work we were going to realize. I felt a very strange strength and power, which co-existed with great compassion for the people around me (these states are called in Sufi psychology, hashyet/awe and heybet/majest. The Sufi state of awe is a mixture of power, dread, admiration and deep respect).

The wise old lady of my dream, the powerful and compassionate lover, hadn't shown her face before with this intensity. I had to do something very special, a sacrifice to be honored to see the face of this inner lover. The two powerful leopards were in her service and during all our work, in extreme and sometimes life threatening conditions, they were present. She was the wisdom in us, the two leopards the qualities of steadfastness and fortitude.

These were different kinds of state to those I experienced before, during my purely meditative life and resonated with the lack of satisfaction I had found in it. The cause of this dis-satisfaction being a particular form of associated narcissism, the "cosmic" narcissism of pseudo-enlightenment²⁰

²⁰ Buddhism is also aware of this trap and encourages followers to the "bodhisatva" existence

... The feminine essence

Within the Islamic-Sufi tradition these loving messages are often delivered by feminine characters because the essence of the human self is largely feminine. Our deep essence is more characterized by feminine features than by masculine ones. The thirteenth century Sufi Ibn-Arabi saw the feminine principle as being much more expressive of the causes of the universe. In the passage "The Feminine Element in the Creation of the World" (Sufism and Taoism, Toshihiko Izutsu, Iwanami Shoten) Izutsu continues with Ibn Arabi's view, that the entire creative process is governed by the principle of femininity (ta'nith):

The man finds himself situated between an essence (i.e., the Divine Essence) which is his (ontological) source and a woman (i.e., his own mother) who is his (physical) source. Thus he is placed between two feminine nouns, that is to say, between the femininity of essence and the real (i.e., physical) femininity.

One of the unknown aspects of true Islam and Sufi teaching is the prevalence of the feminine principle in the creation. This is also true for humans. When God had decided to create the universe, He said Be and the first Models of existence, the Archetypes, emanated in Gods Imagination. At this level the existence was only planned but not realized. Then the second act of creation happened and God constructed the universe through codes, God's beautiful names. Their number is infinite and every existence carries some of these codes, but humans were honored with the possession of them all. This is the reason why every human, without any distinction, are called the most honorable of all creation (ashraf-ul mahlukat). What is of particular note is the composition of these codes and their "feminine" (djemal) and "masculine" (djelal) nature. Similar to the Yin-Yang symbol but in Islam the Yin (djemal) predominates.

Among the 99 names cited from the Prophet Mohammed (sav) only 11 are masculine or djelal names. Sachiko Murata, a disciple of the late T.Izutsu, also worked on this theme in her book, The Tao of Islam, from which the following extract comes:

When God is conceived of as transcendent, He is called by such names as Mighty, Inaccessible, Great, Majestic, Compeller, Creator, Proud, All-High, King, Wrathful, Avenger, Slayer, Depriver and Harmer. The tradition calls these the Names of Majesty or the Names of Severity. In the present context, I would call them 'yang names', since they place stress upon greatness, power, control and masculinity. When God is understood in terms of similarity and immanence. He is

called by names such as Beautiful, Near, Merciful, Compassionate, Loving, Gentle, Forgiving, Pardoner, Life-giver, Enricher and Bestower. These are known as the 'Names of Beauty' or 'Gentleness'. They are 'yin names', since they place stress on submission to the wishes of others, softness, acceptance and receptivity. All these names and many more like them are mentioned in the Koran. In the view of the Muslim cosmologists, these two categories of names work in harmony to bring the cosmos into existence. As Rumi puts it, referring to the two kinds of names by their dominant attribute, "Severity and gentleness were married, and a world of good and evil was born from the two" (Rumi 1925-40, II 2680, quoted in Chittick, 1983, p. 101).

It is also worth noting that the very word "nafs" is feminine, as is also reality (haqiqah), origin (ayn), creative power of God (qudrah) and the essence of everything and person (dhat). The language of God is predominantly feminine.

The two headed conversation is between our higher and our lower selves that are appropriate for a particular stage of our ascension through the nafs, but they are also informed by that experience of an essential self, that part of us that comes from our universal and largely feminine beginning.

... The hierarchy of 'over-spective' knowing

Over-spective knowing can, without the orientation along the vertical axis of the higher and lower unconsciousness (axis mundi/sirat-u mustaqim), become diluted into nothing more than some in-the-moment pseudo-awareness. If the connection with our Real Self/Djan or twin-Brother is blurred, our vision becomes squint.

Listen attentively to these sayings, o squint-eyed one: apply the eyewash through the ear

Mathnawi II/315

When the eye is quite perfect, it sees the root (origin); when a man is squint eyed, it sees the branch (derivative).

Mathnawi V/1709

When we loose the over-spective vision and stay on the surface of existence, of people and phenomena, the innate wisdom disappears. However by developing this deep awareness, by bearing witness to our very selves and phenomena from a higher dimension of existence, brings to us the experience of real freedom, freedom

we were longing for our whole life that exists beyond space and time. Welcome to the Sufi state of essential freedom...

(TO BE ADDED Ayahs should be added Huvel evil veil ahiru...

Chapter 14. The Third Nafs Level, the Inspired Nafs

When you are at the shore of the Ocean you should dive in... you should dive to get different pearls. But what do I mean by diving in the Ocean? To dive into the Ocean is to change the dimensions of your life, to go where you cannot breath, to immerse yourself, to risk your life, to touch a dimension you've never known

Diving in the Ocean, from a psychological perspective, is having a connection with this immense unconscious potential that is buried in us. But not every diving in brings the great pearl, a pearl being the unfading states that we carry in us.

Being in touch with this third level of nafs happens after the wild animals of the commanding nafs have been tamed, submitted and subdued. Then from the balcony of our existence we saw their actions on the stage with regret and repentance, that was the observing nafs. The work that is done to ascend through the commanding nafs is still quite self-focused, whereas the experience of being in the second nafs is like being at the shores of an ocean. Now the journey becomes serious, we first step in with one foot, then the other and start to swim... but swimming isn't enough, we should dive.

*When at dawn the Ka'ba appears, it is discovered who
has lost the (right) way;
Or like divers under the depth of the (sea)-water, every one
(of whom) picks up something in haste:
In hope of (getting) precious jewels and pearls, they fill their
bags with that and this;
When they come up from the floor of the deep sea, the
possessor of the great pearls is discovered,
And (also) the other who got the small pearls, and the other
who got (only) pebbles and worthless shells.
Mathnawi V 330*

We have been living our life in the interior of our country, we know about fields and forests, villages and small rivers that stay within their bounds (and even when they break them we can still see the extent of their flooding). But then one day we walk beyond the boundaries of our normal life and head out across the mountains and sand dunes, and enter the sheer distance that has kept us secure within our bounded universe. And we reach the ocean and at first we can't believe it; we search and search for the edge, but there is nothing, only a horizon which the ocean just

keeps pouring itself over. Now we know that there is something beyond our home-country and our ego has such a perspective for the first time.

... The appearance of moonshine

After a while when we sit and analyze our situation as a human being, when we see our loneliness and the way we exist in the world, and really notice the weaknesses we have and feel our major sins and faults, then we can find ourselves moved to make corrections. We start to put right some of the things we made wrong; usually this begins with something small, the dramatic gesture is out of keeping with the Sufi way and speaks to still being at the stages of simple narcissism of the commanding nafs.

This is a time when we begin to talk differently about who we are, with less self-satisfaction, approval and justification. We begin to wish that we hadn't done certain things and that we were different in certain ways – and with this sincere engagement with imperfection within the context of the boundless ocean so, metaphorically, the black clouds covering our long dark night of the soul, that we didn't even know were there, begin to dissipate and moonshine appears.

The moonshine is the beginning of experienced light and is relatively weak, still partly hidden by the clouds that have only dissipated a bit, but it is still enough to give us a sense of hope. We feel good in the light of this pale moon and it represents the beginning of the inspiration of the upper unconscious. This is the time when people start to have ideas that they have never had before, when they can see sense in what until then has appeared senseless. A new structure of consciousness has been established that cannot be explained in terms of the structure that existed before.

A natural, inborn humility comes to the fore, giving people a felt sense of being that lies outside of the realm of the ego. As this orientation and way of being takes hold so the character of people's dreams change and they become capable of getting in touch with a broader range of symbols, of incorporating and feeling them as part of their own being. They are also in touch with the feelings and symbols of others and not just with their own feelings and symbols.

... Sad Emily

As I talked to John about this our conversation took place in the presence of an image John found distracting and disturbing. In an art museum where creativity,

harmony, aesthetics of all ages and cultures were exhibited, suddenly we were confronted with it, as if the aim of the Curator was to fix our attention to an invisible tragedy of our time. This sudden *deus ex machina* effect filled our hearts with sadness and as if hypnotized we looked at her for a long while.

The image came from a poster advertising an exhibition of the work of the fashion designer Alexander McQueen and showed a white faced model, wearing a wild head-dress of peacock feathers, but most alarmingly of all for John a lump of smeared red lipstick. It was as if she had been hit, or had her identity overwhelmed, by the over-emphasis on this mass of a red mouth. The qualities of a clown mouth co-existing with the qualities of the abused woman-child, in turn set-off by the delicate coloring and veins of the feathered head-dress.

We then sat on a bench and imagined her as a symbol we could have encountered in one of our own dreams. At the time we called her 'Sad Emily' and she was present with us as we talked about the beginnings of the ascent into the Inspiring *nafs*. She spoke directly at the time to the incorporation of symbols outside of ourselves, to the beginning experiences of drawing into ourselves the totality of existence. As we describe her image now, we are struck by how much more was present in her – how she held within her so many perspectives, the beautiful and the terrifying, the delicate and the brash; she was awash with symbols which defied easy categorizations and spoke instead to a world of complicated wholes.

What is most fitting from our engagement with the image is that John was, in the moment, drawn to the negative in her, seeing only the sadness and this is a predisposition that is a feature of our Freudian soaked civilization. It is the negative that we are drawn to, the damaged shadows that we find our attention focused on. But as soon as we made her our inner symbol, a new discovered part of our unconscious, she had a much deeper meaning for us, more than a negative symbol.

... From projection to compassionate empathy

Sad Emily becomes a hidden part of us, our own sadness and tragedy. This is more than simple empathy but instead is an emblem of a deep togetherness, a unity of fate and compassion. This encounter lets us touch through our own misery and make contact with all humanity. Such strange feelings might open the gate to an until then unknown dimension of ourselves, the inspiring *nafs*. The signs of God ("ayah" has a deeper meaning than divine verse as cited in the Holy Quran,) are everywhere, the world is filled with signs. And the creation where God is most present is the human

being, every human being. God emanates to humans through humans and maybe through Emily's tragic eyes we also saw signs of God.

AND ON EARTH there are signs [of God's existence, visible] to all who are endowed with inner certainty, (51:21) just as [there are signs thereof] within your own selves: can you not, then, see?

The Fifty-First Surah Adh-Dharyat (The Dust-Scattering Winds) 51/20-21

Please look at her and don't scare the bird, just look.



But from the perspective of the third nafs level we move out from this purely negative fixation. The sight of the lower levels of nafs has a projective focus. The more we see in someone a flaw or fault, some ugliness or imperfection, whatever negative attributes we see the more in reality we project onto them our inner misery. Of course the Sufi also sees these flaws but he or she doesn't fixate on them.

O you who have attained to faith! Avoid most guesswork [about one another] for, behold, some of [such] guesswork is [in itself] a sin; and do not spy upon one another, and neither allow yourselves to speak ill of one another behind your backs. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Nay, you would loathe it! And be conscious of God. Verily, God is an acceptor of repentance, a dispenser of grace!

The Forty-Ninth Surah Al-Hujurat (The Private Apartments) 49/12

As soon as you remember about the flaws of others, immediately remember your own faults

(Hadith/Holy Saying of Prophet Mohammed -sav-, Munawi 1/272 -419-)

Once more let me emphasize the subtle character of these changes, their wonderful modesty! You can see the influence of the inspiring nafs in how people decorate their house, in the aspirations they have, in the charities they now work with, in their passion for their family. There are small but constant changes in their lives, and it is the constancy of these changes that is of special note. Once someone is allowed to live the states of the inspiring nafs, the influence of the lower nafs structures, the commanding nafs and the lower unconscious, is less present in them. The beautiful stars of the heavenly sky appear...

Behold, We have adorned the skies nearest to the earth with the beauty of stars, and have made them secure against every rebellious, satanic force
The Thirty-Seventh Surah As-Saffat (Those Ranged In Ranks) 37/6-7

The more we ascend on the nafs levels the more we are protected.

It also holds within it, its own trap. This first experience of inspiring light can be overwhelming for someone who has otherwise lived within the context of the commanding nafs; any light is blinding when you're used to living in the dark. The ascent into the higher nafs is now the experience of a light controlled by a dimmer switch being turned gradually up. The moonlight will become divine light, the remaining dark clouds will turn gold and become magnifiers rather than barriers to light. Go and look at Turner's painting of Caligula's palace and you will see what we mean!

... Some qualities of inspiration

The Inspiring nafs allow you to experience new states and through experience so you learn. It is not about being told ahead of time what it is you are able or need to learn, because the learning happens only through the experience of you changing state. Even if you're very narcissistic you'll find yourself trying to do charitable work, it is the change in state that has led you to change what you do – not the other way around. The change in state does not announce itself, instead it arrives with its distinctive taste and the person realizes the wisdom of the state, without knowing it. Rational understanding is not a process for change, change happens when we experience these states without explanation.

This is learning though the experience of holy states and they're holy because they are common to all humanity – they are a universal gift from God, not something that

belongs to any individual or can be seen as emanating from anywhere but the upper levels of the higher unconscious. When we are still living at the level of the commanding *nafs*, we are drawn to narcissism and the belief that each of us has personal ownership of our human expressions. So we will say: 'I am compassionate... I am loving,' or 'She is generous and he is merciful', locating these qualities as part of an individual's psychological make-up. But when we see that compassion, a capacity for loving, generosity and mercifulness are holy states, then we realize that they don't belong to us and they are part of the common experience of all mankind.

My inspiration when I was talking with John did not come from me; if I was inspiring then I was in connection with the Maestro of this wonderful oratorio, which is every human being. He was correcting my tuning, so with God's help the melody became pleasant.

Inspiration is a gift that comes, it cannot be insisted upon. In the Sufi tradition when the Sheikh, the spiritual master talks, his words depend on the listeners receptivity. If there is no interest then he goes away rather than talking useless words. If you insist on being inspiring, then you are in the grip of your egoism; you are like the unwanted visitor continuously knocking on the door, the salesman who will not go away and so kills the relationship he is desperate to nurture.

Inspiration, in the form of holy states, arrives when they see you are ready, not when you would have them arrive. Only the perfect human being has access to the supreme wisdom that can see the whole story and see the perfection of the moment. The rest of us have to hold on very lightly to what we believe is needed, or possible, in any one moment.

... Talking about the higher Inspiring *nafs* and avoiding getting stuck at the level of the third *nafs*

In my other works I give an intellectual guide to the overall structure of the *nafs* and the rich and complex ways that the great Sufis of the past have found to describe the experience of moving into the higher *nafs* levels. I would be in severe danger of inflating the balloon of my self-importance if I began, in a book for the general reader such as this, to talk knowledgeably about what happens at the higher *nafs* levels.

In modern times where all information and wisdom seems so easy to access, many books have been written about the supreme wisdom, enlightenment and the path to

human fulfillment. People can be seduced into imagining that through the relatively simple work of intellectual effort, so wisdom can be attained. What we then have are people with huge heads that they are hardly able to carry, so stuffed are they with unlive wisdom. But these big-headed ones have very small hearts which don't correspond to their arrogant and would-be omniscient heads.

You can pour into people's heads all the wisdom in the world but the connection to the heart has a definite calibre which determines the rate at which learning and development can happen – when that calibre is exceeded, then the would be wisdom simply overflows. For now we will mention here only the names of the seven nafs/self levels and stop rather than describe the higher levels from the inspired nafs on.

1 Nafsi Ammarah, The evil commanding self

2 Nafsi Lawwamah, The self reproaching/observing self

3 Nafsi Mulhimah, The inspired self

4 Nafsi Mutmainnah, The self at peace

5 Nafsi Radhiyah, The self which is pleased with his Lord

6 Nafsi Mardhiyyah, The self with which his Lord is pleased

7 Nafsi Kamilah - Nafsi Saffiyah. The purified, perfect self

If we insisted on going into unnecessary explanations, we would be in severe danger of inflating the balloon of self-importance both in us and in our readers. This is book of Sufi inspired psychology and nothing more.

If we said more it could also lead the reader to believe, however implicitly, that there is a simple path to follow that can be known ahead of time. We do not want to fall into that trap and so I have agreed with John that we will go no further than the description we have done so far, that covers the experience of the third nafs. The development through the Inspiring levels is, as we hope we have made clear, not something that can be demanded but has to be invited. It is the experience of the holy states that changes a person not the knowledge of them. Development is an exercise in surrender not in mastery or acquisition, about stepping into the universal qualities that we know through our experience of being born into perfection and union, and which we learn to recover through engagement with the Sufi psychological tradition.

There is also one catch that can happen for people when they reach the third nafs. The experience is so overwhelming compared to what they have known before in their lives, that they become convinced that they achieved mastery, that there is

nowhere else for them to go with their development. This is the experience we have mentioned before of reaching the 900th floor of a building and assuming that, because its views are so wonderful, that this must be its top. The third nafs is not the end of the Sufi development path; it is simply a higher level of existence that secures people from the control of the lower, commanding nafs.

Escaping this trap is usually beyond the capacity of the individual working on their own and it is at this point that they will need to find a Sheik, a spiritual master, to work with them. Which also explains our felt sense not to include any of the higher *nafs* in this book; once you have achieved the third *nafs* then is the time to move beyond the seeming comfort of a written companion.

Part IV – Engaging wisely and hopefully in your own life

- Chapter 15: Engaging with poetry and dance
- Chapter 16: The risks of uncontained psycho-spiritual exploration
- Chapter 17: Something always has to die
- Chapter 18: The secret formula of ascension is surrender (Zero's story)
- ... A fuller dedication

Chapter 15. Engaging with poetry and dance

Amongst the many paradoxes that make up this book has been that it is written as text. Pictures and poems have been used only sparingly, most of what you the reader have faced is blank text. And yet, as I have mentioned a number of times, at the heart of the Sufi experience is experienced subtle states. These states can only be partly triggered by written text. Creative prayer, recitation of the Holy Quran and the holy names of Allah -cc-, meaningful altruistic action, rhythmic music, choreography, poetry, calligraphy and maybe most important of all, the beyond description touch of hearts with a Mursheed are necessary to experience these states. One of the most fascinating examples of such a combination of music, choreography, aesthetics and common prayer is the Mawlawi ceremony of Sema or the whirling dervishes description

... A short description of the Mawlawi ceremony of Sema

The ceremony consists of six main parts. The first starts with a Praise Recitation for the Prophet Mohammed (sav) (na't-ı sherif). The second continues with a sudden sound of drum that symbolizes the beginning of creation (Kun = be, **qun fe yeqûn**).

*The Originator is He of the heavens and the earth: and when He wills a thing to be,
He but says unto it, "Be" - and it is
The Second Surah Al-Baqarah (The Cow) 2:117*

The third begins with a prelude of nay flute, which symbolizes the first inspiration of Holy Breath to all human beings.

*(15:28) And lo! Thy Sustainer said unto the angels: "Behold, I am about to create mortal man out of sounding clay, out of dark slime transmuted; (15:29) and when I have formed him fully and breathed into him of My spirit, fall down before him in prostration!"
The Fifteenth Surah Al-Hijr 15/29*

The fourth is named the Whirling of Sultan Veled (the honorable son of Mawlana Rumi -ks-). The dervishes make a circular walk around the sema ground, following one another and when they come before a fallen sheep, lain on the ground, symbolising the sacrifice of the commanding nafs.

They interrupt their walk before the fallen sheep, the further one turns around so that both dervishes are confronted face to face, they first gaze on one another and then bow with respect. This gazing is the mutual reflecting of the Higher Selves (Djan), and an annihilation in the other (tawheed, that experience of togetherness in supreme oneness)

*The believer is the mirror of the believer
(Abu Daawud, no. 4918)*



After this mutual confirmation, remembering through one another who we have been from the very beginning of creation, the dervishes go around the platform for another three turns. The platform represents the external but also internal aspect of the universe. Each round has its own specific and profound meaning.

The fifth part is the real, or essential, beginning of the ceremony and consists of four sub-parts. The Dervishes start their individual turning, with a naming at the end of every turn of the Holy Name, "Allah". The first sub-part represents the rational knowing (the propositional knowing of Heron which I will explore shortly), the second one, knowledge through witnessing (the experiential knowing of Heron), the third one represents being annihilated in Gods love, where the sun of divine Love shines, there is no place any more for me and you. And the last sub-part is the closing of the divine gestalt and the returning to the world, a new birth.

The sixth part and the end of the ceremony is the recitation of the ayah

*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 Second Surah Al-Baqarah (The Cow) 2/115*

A last prayer is realized for all the past prophets of humanity, all the saints and friends of God and the dervishes retire to their cells to meditate about their new birth. This ceremony is officially held each year in the central Anatolian town of Konya, on the 17th of December. Mawlana Rumi -ks- called this day of His passing away the night of the wedding, symbolically meant as the union of the Lover with the Loved One.

Let us also give a summary of the Sema ritual with the words of Mawlana Rumi, Himself (A.A.Konuk, Sharh of Mathnawi, Band 9, Page 89):

Do you know what whirling (Sema) is?
It is the answer "yes" when your almighty Lord asked you, "am I not your Lord?"
It is to be cut from yourself and be united with the Lover
It is, with the stroke of Gods love, rendering one's head like a ball and running
around without feet and head
It is the struggle with the nafs...
It is like the wounded bird, who flutters on the bloody earth
It is like the holy saying of Prophet Mohammed: I have such instants with my Lord,
even angels can not intervene there
It is like Shams-e Tabrizi opening the hearts eye, witnessing to the holy heavenly
lights...

People from all of the world, not only Muslims, all Lovers gather there and dive into this ocean of endless love. We are one humanity, so close to each other, the separation between us only an illusion.

Within the Western tradition, John Heron has been exploring for many years how to invite people to know the world outside of the intellectual and propositional, and John finds the framing of his Extended Epistemology a useful anchor for making sense of the potency of poetry and dance.

Understanding the Sufi world through John Heron's frame

The Anglo-American mind is fixated with Action and Analysis; this locks it into patterns of superficiality as what counts when it comes to understanding the world draws on a very narrow base of feeling, expression and experience.

John Heron's Extended Epistemology seeks to position Action and Analysis at the top a pyramid, while the worlds of Expressive Knowing and Experiential Knowing are the broader base on which they depend. Heron's framing has some overlap with Sufi philosophy, but also some striking differences. In terms of overlap Heron gives great weight to the importance of expressive knowing, which is of course where dance and poetry come in. They are forms of knowing that seek to bring into expression rich and complex forms; in the Western scientific tradition the goal has been to try and avoid the complications of feelings and emotions, and so the poetic has been disregarded or relegated as a medium of insight. As a result much Western insight has become divorced from human relevance, as it doesn't speak to an important part of our natures.

At the base level of experience Heron makes allowance for the experience of dreams, usually either pathologised within the Western tradition or seen as 'noise' or 'junk' by those who are only convinced by material experiences. Dreams as a transformative or state changing experience does however sit outside of Heron's framing. But let me use Heron to explore the distinctive qualities of how Sufi psychology fits and doesn't fit with this more broad-minded framing of Western thought. I will do this in terms of four claims I make about Sufi psychology:

- Sufi thinking does not see a pyramid of causality between experience and action (change)
- The role of the upper unconscious exists outside of the construct of Heron's four levels
- Sufi thinking is about the achievement of wholeness and integration – not only analysis and action
- There is a spiritual goal to the Sufi philosophy – not some generalized action that exists outside of a moral context

... Sufi thinking does not see a pyramid of causality between experience and action (change)

As has been brought out in earlier parts of the book, most recently in my story of the change in state that happened when the baby on the mortuary slab opened its eyes to me, Sufi psychology sees experience and action or change being able to happen in the moment or instant. When you receive a loving message from outside of your lower self, from your higher Self, there is no need to go through a filter of analysis. Heron's level of analysis gives the head a pivotal role, whereas for the Sufi practitioner it is the experience of the heart, the state that speaks the truth.

The change in state is gifted from outside of the ego at the lower level. It arrives as a whole, not in fragments - like a quantum jump. Experience, expression, understanding and change can happen as a unity, rather than as a sequence of steps that are worked through. Sufism is about a movement towards the wholeness of being, not about staying with habits of fragmentation and hierarchies of causality.

... The role of the upper unconscious exists outside of the construct of Heron's four levels.

The upper unconscious exists as an eye above Heron's construct; it is the voice, the higher or balcony twin, that speaks to the lower twin at whatever level of Heron's hierarchy he is operating in. There is a benign and loving dialogic partner who sits outside of whatever is figural to the lower twin.

Heron's framing has no knowledge of this higher presence that can see the world from the position of ascent through the nafs. It has no way of describing how this ascending knowledge gets known, how experience, expression, understanding and action can change their states. The presence of the potential for perfection creates a way of knowing and being in the world that is very different to most established Western thinking, it has a distinctive goal – not one confined to the ego and earthly being, but a goal that exists in re-integration into the universal perfection.

Let me give an example. Einstein was working on his life goal, the Unified Field Theory, he was trying to unify the fundamental forces of the universe under one theory (strong interaction, electromagnetic interaction, weak interaction, gravitational interaction). Then one day he received a strange letter from a European physicist, Kalusa-Klein. Klein proposed him to add another dimension to the theory of Riemann. Riemann had formulated an equation, through which the coordinates of any location in the universe could be calculated (in a four spatial dimensions, one needs a collection of ten numbers at each point to describe its properties, no matter

how crumpled or distorted the space, this collection of ten numbers at each point is sufficient to encode all the information about that space)

But Kalusa-Klein was pointing to another reality, the Reality seen from outside. Einstein didn't understand the meaning but still kept the letter in his drawer until he realized the meaning two years later, but couldn't accomplish this last task during his lifetime. Herons Extended Epistemology seems to be a brave attempt to break through the walls of this rational, materialistic prison of western culture. Instead of seeing the world from one propositional perspective he proposes three more perspectives.

But it is not enough, to witness the reality (mushahida-i haqiqah) we need a fifth perspective, and this one doesn't lie on this dimension, we have to transcend to a higher level of the nafs and observe the play on the stage with the eyes of our twin sister or brother. In this sense, as human dimensions are endless and a human being is an endless being with infinite evolutionary potential), from the Sufi point of view the physical dimensions are also endless - not only the 10 or 26 as proposed by the physicists.

It is a paradox that as dimension-less beings we try to fit the universe and all creation into a reduced number of dimensions. Maybe the new message of "Caluza-Klein" should be not to add another dimension to understand the universe and ourselves, but to forget about all the dimensions. Because the creation is not a fixed and final process but renewed at every instant.

*On Him depend all creatures in the heavens and on earth; [and] every instant ("day")
He manifests Himself in yet another [wondrous] way. (55:30)
Which, then, of your Sustainer's powers can you disavow?
The Fifty-Fifth Surah Ar-Rah Man (The Most Gracious) 55/29-30*

We turn now to one of most interesting features of the Sufi wisdom, the tremendous reality of "perpetual creation". Ibn Arabi -qs- says that at every moment, and moment after moment, the same eternal process of annihilation and re-creation is repeated (khalq al jadid). Thus we cannot experience the same world twice at two different moments. But it is not only the world, "we" are also in eternal renewal, we can have a real living feeling of this "new creation", both in our mind and body. The Great Sufi of Murcia (Spain), His Holiness Ibn Arabi, smiles at us from His eternal demure and whispers:

The wonder of all wonders is that man (and consequently, every-thing) is in perpetual process of ascending, And yet (ordinarily) he is not aware of this because of the extreme thinness and fineness of the veil or because of the extreme similarity between...

This is the profound meaning of the third dimension of nafs structure and psychology. We have an explication of the “subtle states” (what Charles Tart described as “discrete altered states of consciousness”) and ontological urgency of ascending in nafs structure. Welcome to the Multilevel Extended Epistemology!

... Sufi thinking is about the achievement of wholeness and integration – not analysis and action.

The Western mind is fixated on taking steps, turning everything into tangible action. The Sufi mind is about becoming more informed and in touch with the perfection of the universal. It is all but impossible for someone who wishes to be taken seriously within the West not to embed their philosophy within a belief in ego based action.

Wholeness and integration are about states of being; while there is a sense of movement, it is the movement of structures of consciousness not the movement of action – although new action may result from, or lead to, a shift in a structure of consciousness.

... There is a spiritual goal to the Sufi philosophy – not some generalized action that exists outside of a moral context

Heron’s philosophical framing continues a Western tradition of avoiding putting knowledge within a moral framework. Breadth of experience and more expressive qualities are seen as a good thing in their own right, no attempt is made to ask or answer the question: what counts as morally good experience, expression, analysis and action?’

This Western habit of stripping away the moral context for knowledge can be seen as one of the risks of transferring Sufi wisdom into the Western context, much as Buddhist mindfulness is being commercialized and popularized without reference to the necessity of creating a moral compass, the first stage of work in the Buddhist tradition.

... Marrying the paradox of explaining poetry and dance in blank words

This book is about Sufi psychology, but it isn't Sufi psychology. Sufi psychology is known through experience and practice. As a book it is an intellectual abstraction that points you the reader towards how to take some steps into Sufi experience. By reading this book you do not know what Sufi psychology is – but it may open your heart in such a way that dreams and loving messages find a way into your life, and so draw you into the life that will find its own path towards perfection.

Chapter 16. The risks of uncontained psycho-spiritual exploration

In this chapter we would like to explore the risks of uncontained psycho-spiritual exploration through the eyes of the following groups:

- The 'New Age' Followers
- The Jungian Analysts
- The Masters of Technique
- The Tourists

The 'New Age' Followers and the hopelessness of an unsustainable peak experience

If I look back on my meditative experiences I have wonderful memories, the haiku influenced poetry giving a taste of those days:

*small mountain cell
paining knees
down there my family
outside bitter cold
spare rain drops
strange bird
singing its song
although it rains
like a relative
my fate companion
more than this
both of us
lonely in the mountains
share without "knowing"
the delightful instant*

My first "touch" with meditation happened in the Zen-dōjo of Zürich, Switzerland where my need for spiritual deepening was awakened through my psychotherapy practice. At the time I was passionately committed to Carl Rogers's "Non Directive" approach to therapy and did the best I could in my emphatic encounters with patients. As I practiced in this way strange feelings filled my heart and the experience of my professional encounters became increasingly unusual, time became

unattached from the clock and one hour of therapy passed as if it was no more than a couple of minutes.

But more than anything it was the human being before me in my consulting room who evoked a storm in my heart. Their eyes fascinated me and I was hypnotized with what I saw in them, but could give no explanation or definition. There was such an indescribable depth that all but stopped my mind. When I shared these feelings with an American friend, whom I knew had experience of meditation, he smiled at me and said: "Oh man! It is time for you to meditate". So I took his advice and connected myself to the Zen dojo²¹.

After my first 40 minutes of Zazen, sitting meditation, I had a feeling of amazing lightness, as if I were flying and had become detached from the earth. This had an immediate and profound effect on me, like the first experience of young love, and I was swept off my feet! Immediately meditation became a part of my daily life. If I step back and try to make sense of this experience and attachment, what I think was going on was this. At the time I was filled with chronic anxiety and prone to obsessive thoughts, this probably weighed heavily on my mind. In that first Zazen, through concentrating on my breath, I was able to forget them and it was this that gave me this feeling of lightness. It felt like a breakthrough and maybe for the first time in my life I had been able to leave the prison of my anxiety and obsessive thinking.

The other wonder was, when this storm in my brain stopped, when I was in the still eye of the hurricane, the surrounding world also changed. Every sound, sight and smell acquired another deeper meaning. I still remember, the barking of the dogs in the far neighborhood from our flat in Zurich...

*lonely in my room
sitting still on my zafu*
suddenly in the neighborhood
dogs barking
tears in my eyes*

* *Zafu is the meditation cushion on which one sits*

²¹ My first attempt to make contact with Sufi circles in Zurich failed. I couldn't meet with the responsible person.

Why the tears? They came from the sense of extraordinarily close connection and kinship to everything in the world. It was a felt experience of brotherhood or loving kindness; whatever the name I give, it was a wonderful experience of being.

Within a relatively short period of time the "I" I was at the time was practicing meditation for almost four hours a day, while also engaging in long retreats in all manner of places, from mountain caves to quiet glades in the woods. I became an authority on meditation in Turkey and would organize silent meditation days in Bodrum. We'd meet in the tangerine garden of a small stone house, beneath a pond, hidden in a bamboo grove and in the shade of olive trees. We'd be filled with the sight of colorful bougainvillea and be entranced as we listened to the whispering wind and the nightingales.

When I returned to the world after being on such a retreat I had a great influence on people. It was as if they were hypnotized by my apparently shining aura and my words penetrated deeply into their hearts. I could control my chronic anxiety and experience wonderful states of equanimity and loving kindness – and those who attended also profited. So what could possibly be wrong with it? Well, I have painted a wonderful veneer of what was going on, the reality behind the appearance was very different. After a while, without my willing it, an insidious and sneaky persona developed in me, in spite of my apparent modesty – I was becoming a spiritual narcissist and the role I was playing was all artifice.

At first I fought it but whatever I did added more fuel to this insidious fire. My body language, my meta-communication, my voice, in short all my being was invested in this role. Most of the people around me didn't notice anything but I was finding it increasingly unbearable. So one day after a meeting I announced to my "followers" that I had to stop. There was a deep sadness in all of us and they tried to persuade me to stay with the practice, but thanks to God my decision was very firm, although my heart was broken.

After a while I started my Sufi orientation and with horror really noticed this inflated ego of mine, which was so important for my "flying" over mountains and forests, and realized it had no use anymore. Stepping away from this way of being is a very painful process, you feel naked, castrated, worse than death and reduced to nothing. My Sufi Teacher, my Sheikh started to deflate my ego balloon and what air there was in it! For 20 years now I've been engaged on the Sufi way and still some air is coming out! What a monstrous inflation of self! It is nearly beyond me to express my gratitude to God, the All Compassionate Lord of All Heavens, who took mercy on me.

Using a Sufi psychological perspective let's analyze what happened to me during these days of ego-inflating meditation.

... Experiencing the upper states in an uncontained manner

Spiritual practices in general, and especially meditation as I practiced it, is founded on the psychological principle of reducing the mind's rational activity and activating the heart. From the perspective of Sufi psychology human existence alternates between these two main centers and we can be either predominantly rational, heart centered and/or experience mixed states. Through the activation of the heart, the superficial perception of the world gains other qualities and simple phenomena, such as the barking of the dogs, awake in us those latent, pre-existing states that give the world around us another quality that we may never have experienced before.

The five senses with which our rationality works gives only a limited range of perception, but with the activation of the heart so we experience other subtle senses such as:

- Seeing the deep meaning of all things (basirah);
- Witnessing the wonder of the world (mushahadeh),
- Seeing the dynamism of existence, how everything is in a constant state of flux;
- Over-sight or over-spective knowing, that opposite of the introspective perspective (ferasah),
- Discovering what has always been there but we have been unable to see (mukashefe)
- Pure phenomenological seeing, knowing the world in itself and without mediating lenses and frames (ru'yah).

When these subtle senses become active, the veil that has hidden the world from us is lifted and everything becomes perfect! This is the paradise we long for during our life. The psychological interpretation is that we have experienced the touch of our upper un-conscious (alam-i mithal). The taste of such a new dimension is unforgettable but also brings dangers. If we cannot maintain this vision and fall back again to our regular world of unsubtle black and white senses, we experience a deep sense of deception – as if we have been fooled into knowing a world better than we are currently living in. Driven by a desire to fix our connection with this higher world, we try and try again to stabilize these subtle feelings, this paradise state.

From a Sufi perspective, this stabilization would mean having a constant “station” (maqam). What we experienced before were “states” and these states fade away. After years of such an up and down evolution, if there is no stabilization, we are in an intermediary existence. This ordinary world of unsubtle senses loses its meaning, while the higher world remains out of reach. Consequently a very insidious depression develops, referred to as the ‘No Man’s Land Depression’, which is essentially pseudo-spiritual in character and lives in the shadow of the knowledge of what a real spiritual life is like.

Compared to this essentially self-made pseudo-spirituality we have the spirituality that is developed by engaging with systematic Sufi teaching, under the direction of a competent Guide. It is this outside-of-self development process that makes it possible for us to gradually become inhabitants of these higher realms of human existence. Sufi oriented psycho-spiritual guidance, or therapy, encourages the seeker to first of all be aware of what is going on at the stage of the commanding self and the cellar levels of the lower unconscious. This confronting self-awareness is absolutely necessary to reach a first point of equilibrium and to reduce the influence of the shadows of the lower levels on us. Then we may stabilize our existence on a relatively secure platform, that of the Observing nafs (the second Sufi station). The journey of psycho-spiritual development starts with the stabilization of that first observation platform and this opens up your relationship to the inspiring world of the upper unconscious.

The image that Sufis use time and again to represent this dominion over the commanding nafs, the taming of the noisy parasites ascending from the lower-unconscious, with their narcissism and self-obsession, is that of the man astride a tamed horse.



Only once the lower unconscious is relatively mastered is it safe for the exploration of the higher unconscious to take place. Experiencing higher states without taming the horse sooner or later brings a catastrophe. Another metaphor for the rehabilitation of the commanding nafs is the cleaning of a garden of couch grass, through the wisdom of dreams, and the establishment of roses in this cleansed garden in the company of a Gardener, who is the Sheikh.

Not respecting the Divine moral precepts, which protect us from the influence of lower unconscious during this journey makes us even more miserable than before. To be accepted to these higher realms we have to be pure and our heart un-covered. I often noticed that after group meditation practices such as silent days, people fell even more intensively into a hedonistic existence of drugs, alcohol and promiscuous sexuality, living the paradox of first experiencing “light over light” and then the “darkness over darkness”. By not respecting divine moral precepts so we fall back into even deeper levels of the nafs structure – so why is this? Why do we commit this error? Why aren’t we satisfied with what is given? Why do we seem obsessed with always seeking out more and more experience?

My sense is we humans live with a hunger for peak experiences. As described earlier, our primordial suffering originates from the divine creational intention that makes an ascending process a necessity for us. There is an innate, God given,

hunger for every human to experience these subtle states and peak experiences of the higher un-conscious. Every human being has the need to transcend the invisible veils that surround him or her and step into the experience of other universes, what Charles Tart calls "discrete altered states of consciousness"²². This intense hunger to transcend the emptiness of space grows and grows as we age.

Since the beginning of time we have abused drugs and alcohol, a pattern of abuse that reveals our longing for those subtle states specific to the upper unconscious. The altered states of consciousness provoked by different substances gives us a transitory taste of higher realms of humanness. But these self-induced states bring also the risk of falling into the lower unconscious, because of their "covering effect"²³. This risk comes from the probability that substance abuse brings a disorder to the fine tuning of the heart. As most of us know, during the different phases of drunkenness we move between paradoxical feelings and states. Subtle states like awe, equanimity, passion, compassion, wonder, amazement can alternate with feelings such as hate, anger and wrath. The "borders" between our daily ordinary consciousness and both our lower and upper unconscious become more permeable. All the positive states that we experience at the beginning of the substance influence are covered with the parasites of the lower realms. As a consequence we might disrespect those messages of divine inspiration emanating from the third nafs level (nafs e mulhime) and so fall into the depths of the commanding nafs –a fall which is made more acutely painful because of our previous ascent to the higher levels.

In summary the risks of a self made or ill-guided spiritual pseudo-ascension are:

- Ego inflation and an insidious cosmic narcissism, which results in us becoming even more vulnerable to the influence of the lower unconscious
- The long term possibility of developing a "No Mans Land Depression", provoked by the pseudo-spiritual quality of experience
- A spectrum of psycho-spiritual crisis or emergencies²⁴
- Misguiding and harming other people through our pseudo-guru persona.

²² Charles Tart, 'States of Consciousness'.

²³ The arabic word for wine and alcohol in the general sense is "hamr" and means "covering"; our innate ability of seeing the signs of God diminishes. Advice whispered to us through divine inspiration and conscious is no longer heard. We feel no remorse and scruple and commit acts that we later regret. But there is a "controlled drunkenness" we experience during our ascent to the higher levels of nafs, this is the Sufi state of "saki".

²⁴ As described in Christina & Stanislas Grofs book, "Spiritual Emergencies" (like Kundalini awakening, pseudo-psychotic symptoms...)

The Jungian Analysand

I have written extensively elsewhere on the consequences of engaging with a psychological orientation that is rooted in Freudian, Jungian or related thinking. The orientation has a downward focus, it encourages people to explore their depths and complexes, the horrors they have hidden within them, without the redeeming orientation of the upper unconscious. The goal of Jungian analysis is to achieve individuation, that is to live a life of your own choosing in sync with what can be called your essential self – to live a life that is not consumed by the demons of the lower unconscious and which is in tune with your inner being.

For people who have gone down this route, as John has, this can provide much relief – especially if they have been tortured by the unresolved conflicts of their formative years. But it offers people only a limited satisfaction that will, as my experience with the young woman spoken of earlier, eventually pall – and fail to address the question: ‘What next?’ It does not provide a coherent way of furthering ascent – best of all it leads people to the gateway of the third nafs, with its inspiring moonlight, but gives them no language for exploring that transition. It lacks the ‘over-specification’, or two-headedness, that will allow the twin brother in the balcony to speak from the higher position to his brother down on the stage. It lacks an ascending orientation and leaves people in what is still a fundamentally narcissistic state, where the individuated self is the end point of man’s development.

In Jung’s Red Book/Liber Novus a huge importance is placed on understanding the dynamics of the lower unconscious, with Jung attempting a brave descent into these cellars of human existence, where he engages himself in battle with their inhabitants. This work is summarized and put into context by Sonu Shamdasani:

“Liber Novus depicts Jung’s descent into hell...whereas Dante could utilize an established cosmology, Liber Novus is an attempt to shape an individual cosmology”...

But can an individual cosmology can be shaped without knowledge of the topography and dynamics of upper realms of the human psyche? In the Red Book, Jung is confronted with the most perfidious strategy of the satanic forces. In every form of disguise the absolute ruler of the lower un-conscious, Abraxas, tries to convince Jung of his irresistible power. He is Philemon the wise, Salome the seductive, Elijah the prophet, Siegfried the hero, the “red one”, the anchorite, the giant Izdubar, the

serpent, the bird, the Turk with a turban, the crazy psychiatrist. And at the end of this we witness Jung's tragic surrender to Abraxas.

"Here where you are the creature subjugated to Abraxas, you must learn to fulfill the work of life... (Red Book, Appendix C 371).

In one sense the Red Book is a monumental didactic work about the misery of a psychology without the knowledge of the higher realms of human existence.

For Sufi psychology the confrontation with the lower unconscious is only the beginning of the great work of ascending, following the upward link to the divine inspiration that is never interrupted. And when the sun reaches its zenith, so the shadows disappear.

The risks of engaging with Sufism from the perspective of a master of technique

As with any longstanding religious tradition, Sufism has developed a significant body of practice but the source is the same, the special spiritual "teaching" that the Prophet Mohammed -pbuh- accorded to His close followers. But as humans have been created with different temperaments there are small differences. Some prefer the practice of remembering in silence (dhkir), like Abu Bakr Siddiq (ra), and some prefer to express it loudly, as Ali (ra). But they all repeat the holy names of God as taught by the Prophet. The Quranic word used for this difference is "mashrab" and comes from the word "shurb" which means drinking. The word is mentioned in the following verse:

2:60 And [remember] when Moses prayed for water for his people and We replied, "Strike the rock with thy staff!" - whereupon twelve springs gushed forth from it, so that all the people knew whence to drink.⁴⁵ [And Moses said:] "Eat and drink the sustenance provided by God, and do not act wickedly on earth by spreading corruption."

The Second Surah Al-Baqarah (The Cow) 2/60

So the twelve tribes of Jews led by the Prophet Moses, had twelve different sources that allowed for twelve different temperaments, or ways of being with God. This difference in temperament is also present among the founders of the great Sufi Ways (tariqah), namely Mawlana Rumi (qs), Ibn Arabi (qs), Abdulqadir Geylani (qs), Ahmad ar-Rifai (qs), Shah-u Nakshibandi (qs), Nureddin al-Jerrahi (qs).

The explanation for this individual difference can be made through the science of the Holy Names. We know every human being carries all the codes, Gods beautiful names, of creation. But only one of these names speaks to our highest human potential, our uniqueness. The direction of individual development is towards this personal Great Name (ism-e adham), even if there never has been such a being and never could be! Because of this eternal uniqueness of every human, Islam doesn't accept the idea of reincarnation. There can be only one "La Jaconde" and every imitation would be an insult to the perfection of the "Smiling Lady"

Genuine Sufi disciplines and approaches are fundamentally to be seen as lived practices with great strength. But as soon as the connection line from Pir (the founder of the way) and from Him to Prophet Mohammed -pbuh- is disrupted, a dilution or distortion happens and the initial strength is lost. We could also compare this lineage to successive crystalline lenses, the closest lens to us is his holiness the Murshid and the first one the Prophet Mohammed -pbuh-, the purest lens that reflects Gods light or Noor. This is an incredible concentration of light over light.

One of our Elders, in his younger days, visited a dervish lodge outside of Istanbul. During the dhikr ceremony, when the dervishes were turning in a circle around the Sheikh of this lodge, they were in extreme ecstasy. And he thought: 'Oh they want to show of me how their Sheikh is powerful'. But immediately after he had these thoughts, the cloth band (taylesan) wrapped up around the Sheikhs turban touched him. One day later he opened his eyes in a hospital and saw the Sheikh smiling at him.

Another example of this intensity of light and power transmitted across the ages happened during the 1st World War, when Istanbul was occupied by British troops. The commanding General heard about these famous Sufis and their strange practices. So he visited a Rufai lodge where the Sheik and dervishes practice self-stabbing with skewers and even swords – but where no bleeding or wound could be subsequently seen.. The proud General was sitting with all his majesty, ironically observing the spectacle, when the Sheikh came before him with a strange smile on His holy face and he stabbed His belly with a sword. The General shouted "Oh God!" and lost consciousness.

All this magnificent human power is present in all of us as dormant potential and comes from the first and supreme "Lens" (may the Friends of God pardon my expression). As Mawlana Rumi says:

*As long as I live I am a servant of the Holy Quran
I am the dust on the way of Prophet Mohammed
If someone tells anything else about me
I am a complainant of this word and of this person*

If there is a weakness in Sufism, it results from the fact that it does not lend itself to having a core teaching based on the Quran and Holy Sayings of the Prophet against which people can anchor their practice. So it lays itself open to potential abuse in the hands of those who claim to be inspired by it.

The genuine evolution for a seeker starts in the annihilation in his Murshid. This annihilation is a different kind of death and the following verses of Mawlana Rumi might give inspiration to our hearts:

*Don't look at me from yourself
Look at me from me
So that you can see passion in passion
Mathnawi Band IV, 2391-92*

The Murshid is like a gate for successive annihilations and being annihilated in the divine light of Prophet Mohammed is the supreme honor.

People who are drawn to Sufism because of its practices and techniques are at risk in at least two ways. Firstly Sufism and its practices are different to many of the new age spiritual amusement park rides. So if the expected satisfaction of spiritual hedonism is not fulfilled people might be disillusioned. Secondly the "I" who is making all this effort, is not there. This was exactly my experience when after years of intensive Zen practice I felt like a bird that had cut off its wings.

The risks of engaging with Sufism as a tourist

This is not a problem limited to the Sufi tradition; the great religions and philosophies of the world are liable to be treated more lightly than they should be, seen as curiosities rather than avenues for exploring fundamental experiences and questions about what it is to human – and how the human experience fits within the context of the Universe.

Tourism is not just potentially bad for the tourist, who can come away from their visit thinking that they have had 'the real Sufi experience' simply by visiting certain sites, reading certain poems and conducting a few amenable exercises. Tourism can corrupt those who make themselves available to tourists; the harder and more uncomfortable truths get softened, a desire to make a tradition that is valued greatly by its practitioners more widely available, turns into an exercise in pleasing the crowd. The ambiguous and the uncertain are made more obvious and easier to digest for people who believe all knowledge should be easy to eat and digest – and for the Sufi way to lose its mysterious qualities, to turn into a roadmap with easy to follow instructions or folksy sayings to guide people's actions, would be a travesty.

... The fear I had for the tourism of this book

At the very beginning when we decided to edit this book, this fear of the tourist trap troubled my mind. Doubts and hesitations could be useful to purify any intention but they still originate in the lower levels of nafs. The more that intentions are free from the egoistical the more doubts dissipate. But how can we know that our intention is pure, healthy?

A while ago I consulted my Murshid about another book I am also working on, a psychological interpretation of the Holy Quran, comparing different interpretations and inspired mostly by Ibn Arabi's Tafsir, Tawil e Kabir and Mathnawi of Maulana Rumi (ks). It is a huge work and fraught with narcissistic danger for someone like me to even think I could realise such an endeavour – especially as I don't even know Arabic. One of the most insidious traps of our ego is the vanity of so-called scientists who adore their science and disregard all other knowledge. This trap is called "udjub" and is the great sin of self-adoration or "shirk". So with all these doubts and shame I went to my Sheik and expected to be scolded. He looked deep in my eyes and recited, with reference to my ignorance of Arabic, the following Holy Saying of the Prophet Mohammed (sav)

Practice with what you know, what you don't know, Allah (cc) will teach you

And what about my fears of vanity? He sat with me for a while without saying anything, then stared at me again and then with a soft voice, almost whispering, said: *'No risk, you are connected'*.

Being connected is such an honor and of course a great responsibility; I find it hard to convey the weight of meaning with simple words. But the feeling, or state, of my

heart is that of a very deep gratitude and comforting confidence, Alhamdulillah. Before I had the audience with my Mursheed I was left with a feeling of profound ambiguity – is this work something that invites people to engage with the depths of Sufi psychology? Is it a work of healing, an expression of God's need to give succor to us, or is it part of mine and John's narcissism – something that makes us both feel good and important about ourselves? Is it pandering to a market or is it the universe winking out to people, inviting them to know perfection in a way that is healthy for them? I didn't want to scare the bird of my brother sitting in the balcony by carrying out any sudden, superficial moves.

My doubts were dissipated through the spiritual aspiration (himma) of my Murshid and as John and I are almost conjoined twins, I am certain that the comforting himma will also appease his heart... and the bird stay with us, not scared off by the bad smell of egotistical intention.

Chapter 17. Something always has to die

Death has been a recurrent theme of this book, especially death as an essential aspect of growth. The co-mingling, co-presence of life and death is in keeping with the universal, indivisible nature of existence that our ascent to the higher *nafs* levels knows to be true.

In my walks around London with John I told him many stories about death, one of which I have already shared with you concerning the young man in the car crash, who walked down into the village and found his name on a tombstone – and which left him feeling surprisingly cheerful! Stories that have death in them are not simple tales; they avoid simple categorization, as is the case with two more stories I want to share now.

The Poisoned Oak Tree

One of my students, a 24 year old, in training analysis had for a while been in a very difficult life situation. It was almost unbearable and all my comforting interventions were empty words. Because of her struggle against the male world, where she felt herself a victim, we ironically called her the Amazon Lady. And when all the words

were finished and hope had almost disappeared the following dream came as a miraculous present.

She was walking alone on a plain, an endless meadow. Then on the horizon there appeared a silhouette, coming closer to it she found herself in front of a huge, magnificent oak tree. With awe she stood for a while before this monumental tree and then knowledge came to her that there was an underground cave beneath the tree. Following the ritual that was known to her in the dream, she knew that every traveller had to spend a night in this cave but as the earth was poisonous, no one survived.

It was now her turn to try so, with some hesitation, but strangely also with some hope, she went in the cave and spent the night. The next morning when she came out, she was not dead but something fundamental was different, she could consider all existence from another dimension (as if from the inside of a soap bubble). The life situation was the same but she could consider all this misery from outside or above it.

The all-compassionate Teacher comes to our rescue every time when we think that all the outcomes are blocked.

God does not burden any human being with more than he is well able to bear: in his favour shall be whatever good he does, and against him whatever evil he does. O our Sustainer! Take us not to task if we forget or unwittingly do wrong!

The Second Surah Al-Baqarah (The Cow) 2/286

We explored what meaning this had for her and agreed that it pointed towards an ascending experience. Her balcony self had sent a loving message to the self that she could see on stage, and knew that she had to be allowed to die. The lower self was ready to begin the next stage of nafs ascent and the first stage of that ascent was to allow that lower self to die, so that a new form of consciousness could take root and be given space to flourish.

The incredible, wondrous ability of seeing the world where we live from outside is called the state of falah. The word comes from the root f-l-h and the first meaning is to cleave, to breakthrough, to plough. Because he cleaves the earth, the peasant is called fallah.²⁵

²⁵ Another meaning is deliverance/salvation as cited in

*(9) To a happy state (efleha) shall indeed attain he who causes this [self] to grow in purity, (10) and truly lost is he who buries it [in darkness].
The Ninety-First Surah Ash-Shams (The Sun) 91/9-10*

It is of note that the call to prayer, which is recited from the mosque five times a day, is "**hayya as-falah**", and it invites us to a "transcending of dimensions".

Back to the dream, we see again the coexistence of "death" with resurrection and this new life is of a higher existential quality. Psychology that can only see the lower unconscious would have focused instead on the possible death wish, the power of Thanatos, the inflated ego that sees itself as superior to other men and women – the cave would have been seen as the gateway to the underworld and that long tunnel that may or may not lead to the locked door, with its keyhole and the unreachable glimpse of amazing radiant light.

By having an orientation that knows of both the lower and upper unconscious the dream can exist within the language of the lower unconscious and the upper unconscious, but it is the language of the upper unconscious that gives the dream its hopeful power. The survival of the night in the deadly cave can be re-known as something wonderful as well as something fearful – it speaks to a rite of passage, of the crossing of a boundary into another state of being.

This interpretation of the dream also gets its energy because of an assumption of loving kindness, that the Real Self, or twin sister in the balcony, inspired by the divine grace, would only send such a message if there was a positive intent.

All the dreams, those that point to our lower unconscious and our vices and shadows as well as those that put us in touch with our higher unconscious, acquire a hopeful significance, especially if one is on a similar path to that described in Zero's story in the previous chapter.

... Osman Effendi's pseudo-death – everything is perfect

As I retrospectively consider the dream of the dead baby, I start to understand Osman Effendi's attitude towards physical death. As I travelled with him from the hospital in İzmir back to Bodrum, as I could see his flesh eating itself and his pulse fading by the moment, all that time the journey was filled with radiance. He held my hand and wanted me to know that 'Everything is Perfect!' Yes in this succession of lives and deaths there is no definitive death. After many deaths and births during our

earthly life, at the end we realize the great voyage and are reborn in eternity.

He who has created death as well as life, so that He might put you to a test [and thus show] which of you is best in conduct, and [make you realize that] He alone is almighty, truly forgiving. (3) [Hallowed be] He who has created seven heavens in full harmony with one another: no fault will thou see in the creation of the Most Gracious. And turn thy vision [upon it] once more: canst thou see any flaw?
The Sixty-Seventh Surah Al-Mulk (Dominion) 67/2-3

... The co-existence of life and death – in a universe beyond life and death

At the heart of Sufi thinking is the knowledge that neither death or life is something as we generally imagine. It is successive melodies as in the Bolero of Ravel, building in crescendo and perfect. We are born out of universal perfection and return to it. We mistake our fall into the lower reaches of the unconscious as a sign of our independent importance, while what we need to learn is that this independent importance is an unhelpful and misleading state of consciousness.

Everything that we need is always present and always exists but not always on this existential level. So when all hope is lost, a miracle happens and we are invited to a higher dimension guided by dreams and divine will.

Chapter 18. The secret formula of ascension is surrender (Zero's story)

At every level of development our fiercest enemy is our ego and at every level there are remnants of ego, less at higher levels but still there. The ego, the sense of individual self, the island consciousness I described in the chapter on the commanding *nafs*, is the far distance we fall from the perfection that we were born into.

Western psychology has reinforced this separated, individual ego by seeing it as the goal of individual development, rather than the furthest point man can be from what he was born to be. This tradition has also supported people in investing in their ego, seeing their individual identity as their most important quality – despite the best endeavours of the various schools of relational psychology, everything starts with 'I' and 'Me', and 'We' is in practice still largely understood as an aggregations of 'I's'.

To speak of surrendering to the Divine will, of seeking to embrace the perfection of being that exists when the experience of being apart from the universal is let go of, does not sit easily with a tradition that has shrunk its sense of being to that of the isolated, haunted self.

... Surrendering the self

For some years John worked with a colleague of mine, Alper, as he worked on his Doctorate. John with his Jungian framing on the world was shocked when one day Alper said, 'I think I've let go of the sense of self'. This sounded to him the most irresponsible of actions – a foolish surrender. Surely the goal of personal development was about establishing sufficient ego strength? It was all about the attainment of a robust self that sat easily with an individual.

John's language and response to Alper absolutely reflects the Anglo-American culture he has grown up in and has inhabited. He may intellectually question the notion of the sovereign self, but in his actions with his clients he assumes that the clarity and strength of the self-ego is all. For him reflection is a single headed activity, with the twin brothers both on stage and noticing and knowing the world within the constraints of a single developmental dimension.

The Sufi tradition also acknowledges how hard it is to step out from the world of the ego. To surrender one's ego is not the work of a single step, but part of a process of surrendering – culturally this is also difficult for many brought up in the world of binary

knowing, where one is either selfish or selfless, one thing or another but never both. The Sufi wisdom, which sees the goal of development as the re-attainment of universal perfection outside of the concept of differentiated parts (tawheed), seeks to embrace a language and experience of being where meaning only exists at the level of the totality.

The surrender of the self is then not something that is lost but something gained, by stepping beyond the world of parts and subdivisions so the self dissolves into the perfection of the universal. But even this framing of the Sufi experience is in danger of ego-inflation, with the idea that somehow the surrender of the self is actually a self-given gift. As with my encounter with the beautiful face in Africa, these encounters and developmental gifts are not earned but granted.

Surrender is a gift given not a state demanded. The Western tradition is to work hard at achieving these states, rather than make yourself open to its possibility.

Surrendering is an act of "active" waiting not an action to be forced. The self does not yield in a selfish battle but through being granted experiences where the experience of surrendering is known first, and understood later.

... Do I write the words or do the words write me?

As John has engaged with his editorial role he has been deeply uncertain about how he is going about his work and where the source of what he has edited has come from. There have been times when he has had no idea how the themes have emerged based on the stories I have told him. He has been in a permanent sense of doubt as to whether he is in any meaningful control of the words he has found himself using – and whether they are the dubious outpourings of his ego, or whether the "Universe" has kindly allowed him to bypass much (or at least enough) of his ego for him to be a useful tool for the upper unconscious.

Zero's obituary

On Tuesday 30th June 2015 John was granted an editorial gift. It came in the form of an obituary in The Guardian newspaper in the UK, written by Athar Yawar and published on that date although he didn't know that it was a gift until a few weeks later. He was wanting to find a way of grounding the idea of ego surrender, worried that what he was writing felt potentially too detached and analytical. He wanted to ground it in a story and then recalled that the "Universe" had already provided him with just what was needed.



“My friend Zero Quensel, who has died of cancer aged 63, led a colorful life characterized by her commitment to environmental causes, her charitable works and her Sufi faith.

She was born Thyra Quensel in Stockholm to Torsten, a theatre director and journalist, and Dagny (nee Helander), a ballet teacher. Her parents were divorced when she was two, and her mother then married a German diplomat, Karl Wand, who was posted to several African countries, including Nigeria.

After leaving her Lagos secondary school as head girl, Thyra completed her education in Germany and, having struck up a relationship with a member of Paul McCartney’s Wings, toured with the band in the 1970s, teaching French to McCartney’s young daughter, Stella, while they were on the road. Eventually Thyra settled down as a teacher in Berlin, where she became part of a circle of people around the influential German environmentalist Rudi Dutschke. Present at the meeting in Offenbach that established the German Green party in 1979, she went on to represent the party internationally, including in Egypt, where she met President Anwar Sadat. She was also on the Greenpeace flagship, Sirius, which entered Leningrad in 1982 as part of an anti-nuclear protest.

Dutschke had died in late 1979 as a result of health problems resulting from injuries sustained in an assassination attempt, and his death deeply affected Thyra, who was left feeling a strong need for faith. In 1983 she met Sheikh Nazim (ra), a Sufi spiritual

teacher from Cyprus, and she became his secretary, driver and student, before moving to London.

In the mid-1990s Sheikh Nazim (qs) gave Thyra the name Zero, explaining that her ego had been reduced to nothing. Inspired by him, she moved to Glastonbury in Somerset, where she opened a shop opposite the abbey, raising money for the Healing Hearts Sufi charity. She also became involved in shipping unwanted wheelchairs from Britain to west Africa, where severe shortages existed, and later helped disabled people in Gambia and Mali to set up their own businesses, in the process providing some of the poorest and most remote communities with wells, schools and places to pray. Zero was utterly conscientious in this work, and was undaunted by any personal risk, ensuring that resources went exactly where they were needed and were not misappropriated.

Well known and liked in Glastonbury, where she supported many vulnerable people, Zero had few possessions and fewer pretensions. Partly through her charisma, organisation and care for others, a lively Sufi community developed in Somerset. She is survived by her mother and by her three sisters, Veronika, Ulrika and Eleonora.”

... A response from the authors

The benevolent action (tasarruf)²⁶ of friends of God (awliyah) doesn't stop with their earthly life, they are still in action from the eternity and send us lovely messages. So welcome to our honorable sister "Zero". The name given by the late Mursheed Nazim (qs) has a very deep meaning. Sufi's express this nothingness with the calligraphy "heech".



She teaches us with her concrete life one of the most important principles of spiritual development. First surrendering than serving. All the prayers, practices and recitations are the one wing but without the other wing, of compassionate and benevolent actions towards all existence, the bird cannot fly.

There is a story about a Turkish Sufi, Ladikli Ahmad Effendi, who was famous for his miraculous deeds. He used to practice voyaging in space and time (tayyi meqan). It sounds incredible but I had the chance to have it confirmed by the late Mawlavi Sertarik, Teacher of Matnawi, Shefik Can Dede. He said to me: 'We were walking together and He suddenly disappeared and appeared again after a while'.

When he was asked, how such deeds were possible, Ahmad Effendi smiled and said: 'Well I think it was not only all the prayers that I have done during my life that are the reason for this gift of my Lord Almighty but the following deed. During the 1st World War, when we were fighting against British troops in Syria, we were moved to a small garrison in the desert. Our rations were limited to a jug of water and a loaf of bread for a whole week per person. During this time, a mother dog arrived with her puppies and I shared my ration with them. My friends all told me, I would die, but as you see, I survived"...

Giving selflessly from whatever we possess in terms of material goods, science and patience should become an automatic way of living. Not everyone can realize such monumental sacrifices like our late sister Zero or Ahmad Effendi, but the more the heart gate opens the more we become aware of possibilities of good deeds. These situations of our dally life are not random happenings but a present given us from our Lord. We could feed hungry birds with breadcrumbs, ants with water and diluted honey or listen to our boring friends sorrow for ten more minutes, even if we have our own problems... we need to smile to our companions with compassion. There is saying of Prophet Mohammed (sav):

Each time when couples look at each other with compassion, God Almighty creates for this action an angel who praises them forever

So there is very active interaction between the Creator and all humans and we are tested every instant.

(2) He who has created death as well as life, so that He might put you to a test [and thus show] which of you is best in conduct, and [make you realize that] He alone is

almighty, truly forgiving.
The Sixty-Seventh Surah Al-Mulk (Dominion) 2

The dervish, automatically performs these deeds without even noticing them, when necessary the action flows out of him, as if on autopilot. In the saying of Prophet Mohammed (sav):

the left hand shouldn't know what the right hand gives...

This explains the un-noticing attitude of giving we should be open to. And the Holy Quran encourages this attitude in multiple verses:

[But as for you, O believers,] never shall you attain to true piety²⁷ unless you spend on others out of what you cherish yourselves; and whatever you spend - verily, God has full knowledge thereof.

The Third Surah Al-'Imran (The House of 'Imran) 3:92

And again through these selfless deeds, without noticing, another wonder happens and we ascend towards the "real life". In the Surah 8/24, "**yuhyi-kum**" means according with life:

O you who have attained to faith! Respond to the call of God and the Rasul (prophet Mohammed) whenever he calls you unto that which will give you life

The Eighth Surah Al-Anfal (Spoils Of War) 8:24

But that is not all, there is another tremendous meaning in the next section of the same ayah:

"and know that God intervenes between man and [the desires of] his heart".

This intervention is the opening of the direct line to our All-loving Creator. The following Surah's 8/28; 3/92 confirm this truth:

²⁷ The word translated as "**true piety**" in the Holy Quran is "**birr**" and comes from the root **b-r-r**. In Ragheeb we find as the 1st meaning, "a wide territory of land, compared to the sea" (Ragheeb al Esfehani). From this concept of wideness comes the word "**birrun**" which means to widen all the good deeds. The same meaning is also an attribute of God as cited in the ayah 52/28.

*and know that your worldly goods and your children are but a trial and a temptation,
and that with God there is a tremendous reward (8:28)*

After all this consideration we can summarize this wisdom in the following way:

- The basic human existential anxiety related to death can be cured through meaningful, compassionate action
- Through this action we experience the subtle states of higher nafs levels which give the world another meaning
- The opening of the direct line gives our faith another quality, we don't only know anymore but we witness miraculous existence

... A Fuller Dedication

A book such as this cannot be written without the "himma", the spiritual guidance of the Wali (Mustafa's Sheikh or spiritual guide). This sense of being inspired by someone that exists beyond the limits of individual identity and egos is described in a simple line from Mawlana Rumi (ks), who quotes in Mathnawi :

The leaf cannot move without the winds blowing

The temptation can be to narrow our gaze to the leaf, locate its energy and the explanation of its movement to within the leaf itself, ignoring the seemingly invisible currents which actually move it and within which it exists. This book is the leaf; the wind, we hope, is the inspiration of his Holiness, if wisdom is present then it only belongs to Him.

So we dedicate this humble book to Mustafa's Sheikh, his Spiritual Guide (Mursheed)