

Abbas Al Humaid

THE
IMMORTAL
SELF

FROM THE ISLAMIC THEORY OF ORIGINATION PROJECT

So That You May Truly Be



First English Edition — 2026



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by

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Editorial Note on Terms and Transliteration. In the main text, recurring Arabic terms are introduced with a brief explanation and then used in simplified, readable forms: *fitra*, *shakila*, *tazkiya*, *kadh*, *tawfiq*, and *siddiqiyya*. Full IJMES transliteration is reserved for the scholarly apparatus where precision requires it. In running text, “the self” normally renders *al-nafs* as a substantive concept and is distinct from the reflexive pronoun “yourself”; the book title *The Immortal Self* is a distinct project expression. Arabic terms are retained where a single English equivalent would blur a governing distinction.

Contents

Title	Page
From the Islamic Theory of Origination Project	6
Introduction — Reclaiming the Station	8
Chapter One — You in the Second Womb	15
Chapter Two — The Neglected Obligation	34
Chapter Three — Your Four Dimensions	59
Chapter Four — The Regularities of Existence	76
Chapter Five — The Regularities of Friction	97
Chapter Six — The Making of the Will	128
Chapter Seven — Substantial Motion	145
Chapter Eight — Divine Aid	165
Conclusion — Deep-Rooted Truthfulness (Siddiqiyya): The Graduated Summit of the Path of Inner Truthfulness	180
Index of the Book’s Concepts	190
Notes and Sources	201
Where Should You Continue Reading?	213
A Message from the Author to the Reader	215
Open Access to Knowledge	216
About the Author	217
Books in the Islamic Theory of Origination Project	219

From the Islamic Theory of Origination Project

The Islamic Theory of Origination is an interpretive intellectual project within the Islamic worldview. It examines human becoming, existential movement, growth, conduct, and the human being's purpose and responsibility. It is a human endeavour: it is not identical with Islam itself and does not replace creed, jurisprudence, Qur'anic exegesis, or specialised disciplines. Nor is it a single book, but a six-book project in which each book has its own question, function, and voice. The books complement one another without duplicating one another's role.

The Six-Book Map

◆ **The Islamic Intellectual Framework** — the worldview foundation and the setting for the wider cosmic account.

◆ **Human Becoming in the Islamic Worldview** — the governing reference text of the theory.

◆ **The Immortal Self** — the book on the human being, human becoming, and the human journey.

◆ **No Limits** — the accessible entry point to the laws and comparative critique.

◆ **Live Happily** — the gateway to contemplation and lived experience.

◆ **The Journey of a Toiler** — the gateway to narrative embodiment.

At its opening, Human Becoming in the Islamic Worldview includes the Reader's Guide to the project, its books, and its reading paths; at its end, it includes a simplified reference glossary of the project's terms. Both belong to the governing reference text itself; neither is a separate volume nor a seventh book within the six-book project.

This Book's Place in the Project

This book develops the project's account of the human being: human becoming, the four dimensions, existential movement, and the journey to God. It asks: who is this one human person within whom the laws operate? What undergoes becoming within the person in this world? And how does personal identity continue after death, sustained by God and carrying what the person has become, without reducing the self to the acquired existential form alone?



Introduction —

Reclaiming the Station

When we contemplate — with full conviction — the declaration of the Lord of the worlds that he made the human being his vicegerent upon the earth, rather than the angels, the jinn, or any other creature, we realise that we stand before a truth far greater than what we are accustomed to seeing in ourselves: ‘I am placing a vicegerent upon the earth’ (Q 2:30).^[1]

Then we recall the angels’ astonishment at this momentous choice, and their question, which discloses the weight of the station granted to the human being: ‘Will you place upon it one who will spread corruption there and shed blood, while we glorify you with praise and proclaim your holiness?’ (Q 2:30). For they — with all their purity and nearness — saw in this new creature a receptivity for corruption and bloodshed; yet God chose the human being for vicegerency. It is as though the human being carries a secret greater than what appears, and a hidden preparedness not yet disclosed to creation.

Then we pause at the moment God commanded all the angels to prostrate before Adam (peace be upon him), after God had proportioned him and breathed into him of his spirit: ‘When I have proportioned him and breathed into him of my spirit, fall down before him in prostration’ (Q 15:29). Here the Qur’anic picture of the human being begins to take shape with awe-inspiring force. The human being is not merely a body of clay, but a creature honoured with a spirit attributed to God and endowed with a receptivity for knowledge, awareness, will, self-transcendence, and ascent. Honour then appears in another form: God subjects the heavens, the earth, and all they contain to the service of this human being: ‘He has subjected to you all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth — all from him’ (Q 45:13).^[2]

But the scene is not complete until we feel the weight of the trust the human being carried — the trust from which the heavens, the earth, and the mountains shrank, refusing to bear it, while the human being bore it with all its consequences and responsibility: ‘We offered the trust to the heavens, the earth, and the mountains, and they refused to bear it and shrank from it — and the human being bore it’ (Q 33:72). Then comes the final purpose of this whole path, the purpose God discloses in his words: ‘in a seat of truthfulness, in the presence of an All-Powerful Sovereign’ (Q 54:55).

We then realise that we are no ordinary creatures, nor merely beings with a more developed intellect than others. The human being was chosen for vicegerency, charged with that trust, given the service of what God subjected in creation, and given an open door to nearness to God. We carry within us capacities and meanings of which we grasp only a little. Something of this was disclosed when God taught Adam what the angels had not been taught, and they acknowledged the

limits of their knowledge before what God had placed within the human being: ‘Glory be to you! We have no knowledge except what you have taught us. You alone are the All-Knowing, the All-Wise’ (Q 2:32).

This — in brief — is the human being as presented by the Qur’an. This is you in the book of God.

Now set this book aside for a moment and call yesterday to mind. You woke a little late and gulped your coffee while scrolling through email and messages. You drove through the morning traffic while your mind rifled through the day’s agenda before the day had even begun. You entered the nine o’clock meeting not yet fully awake, and you moved between messages, action items, and quick calls until your day became one unbroken chain of reactions. You ate lunch in front of a screen, sat through two more meetings in the afternoon, then left drained, without knowing precisely where all that time had gone. You came home, spent an hour watching television or looking at your phone, and slept — ready to repeat the same day tomorrow.

Where is the vicegerent in all of that? Where is the bearer of the trust from which the mountains shrank? Where is the human being for whom the heavens and the earth were subjected? And how did the creature made for this exalted station turn into someone who consumes their days amid accumulating tasks, notifications, schedules, and a silent anxiety that never ends?

This gap — between what God has declared about you and what you actually live each day — is the true subject of this book. Pause here for a moment. The gap did not widen by accident, nor did it take shape on its own. Internal and external forces contribute to it: from allurements and desires to

the patterns of contemporary culture and life. Among them is the ancient vow Iblis made before descending from the Garden: ‘I will make things alluring to them on the earth, and I will lead them all astray’ (Q 15:39).

In fulfilment of that vow, the allurement has not always taken the form of open disobedience. It has often come in the form of ‘normal life’ itself: perpetual running, ceaseless busyness, breathless pursuit without end. It suggests to you that tranquillity lies one more achievement away — one more promotion, one bigger number, a little more recognition. And when you reach what you thought was the goal, it drives you to what lies beyond it, and then beyond that, until the whole of life becomes an endless pursuit in which satisfaction is always deferred. ‘Satan promises them nothing but delusion’ (Q 4:120).

Nor does this allurement work alone. In our age it finds fertile ground in economic and cultural systems that often measure the human being by what they produce and consume, until they almost see themselves as a unit of performance inside a larger machine. In *Small Is Beautiful*, E. F. Schumacher warned that the crisis of industrial civilisation is not merely economic; it touches the meaning of human existence and humanity’s relationship with the world.^[3] This does not require rejecting production or markets, but refusing to make them the final measure of human worth.

Notice what is most dangerous about these mental maps: in all likelihood, you did not choose them for yourself. They were quietly placed upon you until they came to seem self-evident. You put them on each morning without noticing, and use them to measure yourself and those around you: who achieves more, who is more visible, who is more successful?

Then, without realising it, you begin to judge yourself by the value the system assigns you rather than by the value God declared for you from the beginning. This is precisely what prevents you from recognising the station for which you were created.

This book is an attempt to build a larger map. It will not promise to raise your productivity by a fixed percentage, nor offer a list of habits guaranteed to bring success, nor suggest that desire alone shapes reality. Such tools may be useful in their place; but the deeper human problem is not only performance but vision — not merely time management, but meaning and orientation.

What I offer here is a strategic vision of life itself. Just as great institutions do not begin with operational detail before defining their vision and direction, the human being also needs a compass by which to reorder their aims — not by the standards of the market alone, but in the light of their origin beyond this world and their true station. They need an integrated framework through which to understand themselves and redefine success, priority, striving, relationships, and work, so that they move through daily life knowing where they are going and why.

Readers of *No Limits* may recognise some of the ideas they encounter here — the four dimensions, Inner Truthfulness, and the journey to God. Yet the two books differ in their emphasis on foundations and practice. *No Limits* is a practical guide, leading you step by step through exercises and practices. *The Immortal Self* goes to the roots on which those practices rest: why you are as you are, what these dimensions truly mean, and how a quality becomes settled within the self until it enters the acquired existential form. This book

establishes the vision; the other translates it into conduct. A familiar concept will not simply be repeated here; you will encounter it at a new depth — like returning to a known house and entering it this time through its original door.

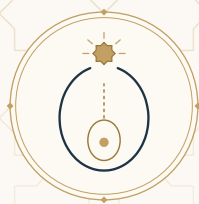
Before we begin the journey, let me be candid about what I hope you may receive from this book, and what I cannot give you. I hope it offers more precise language for what you are experiencing, widens your field of vision, and helps you see the connections among your own self, your Lord, your work, and your destiny. I hope, too, that you find answers to questions you may have carried for years without finding a clear way to express them. What I cannot do is change your outward reality through reading alone or provide a final answer to every question within you. What changes thereafter depends on the truthfulness of your reading, on action, and on God's enabling grace (*tawfiq*).

The journey unfolds through eight interconnected chapters. The first presents this world as a second womb in which the self undergoes becoming. The second grounds self-development anew in *tazkiya* and servanthood. The third reads the one human being through four interwoven aspects: the bodily dimension, heart, intellect, and spirit. The fourth places the human being within the regularities of causes, receptivities, and opposites; the fifth tests that account through friction, pain, environment, and whispering. The sixth turns to the will and Inner Truthfulness, and the seventh to *shakila*, orientation, and substantial motion. The eighth returns all striving to its source: divine aid, which precedes human striving, accompanies it, exceeds it, and opens the way for it to bear fruit. The journey ends with

deep-rooted truthfulness (siddiqiyya) as the graduated summit of the path of Inner Truthfulness. Siddiqiyya itself varies in intensity and scope.

Read this book slowly; it is meant to accompany you for weeks, not days. Take each chapter in stages, and pause over the questions that uncover something within you, rather than over every well-turned phrase. Keep a notebook for what makes you pause. When a paragraph speaks to you in a particular way, return to it or discuss it with someone whose judgment and truthfulness you trust — a brother or a friend. Dialogue may open horizons you would miss alone. The aim is not to turn reading into a training programme, but to give meaning time to settle and to be tested in life.

One last question remains before we begin: if this is your station in the book of God, why do you feel so small in your day? With this question we open the first chapter.



Chapter One —

You in the Second Womb

— ◆ —

This chapter begins from that same gap: where did the fault arise between the station you read in the book of God and the day you actually live?

The problem does not lie in you alone, but also in how you understand the place you are in. The world you may be treating as your final homeland is only one stage of your becoming. The constriction you feel, despite the world's breadth, pleasures, and opportunities, reminds you that the human purpose is not exhausted by this world and that the spirit cannot fulfil its purpose through what this world alone can offer.

Because the idea, stated in this abstract form, may seem remote from direct perception, we need an image closer to human fitra — an image every person understands without effort: the metaphor of the embryo in its mother's womb.

The Embryo Metaphor: The First and Second Wombs

Consider the embryo in its mother's womb: a small being living in a confined space, in total darkness, receiving oxygen and nourishment through the placenta and the umbilical cord. That is its entire world. If we supposed it capable of thought, it would conclude with absolute confidence that the womb is everything, that the wall is the edge of the universe, that darkness is the nature of existence, and that this fluid is the only possible form of life. And if someone tried to tell it that outside this womb lies another world — with a shining sun, colours beyond counting, voices, breath, faces, and the warmth of a hand that will hold it — it would think it was being told of something impossible.

Yet the truth is that everything growing in the embryo inside the womb grows in preparation for a world beyond it. Its eyes, which now see nothing, were created for sunlight; its lungs, which draw no air, were created for air; its hands, which grasp nothing, were created to hold. The womb, in truth, is not a home but a station of formation. And the embryo, in every moment it spends there, is being readied for a world it knows nothing of — a world it is nonetheless certain to enter.

This image brings one aspect of your condition into clearer view.

We may regard this world, by way of metaphor, as a second womb. In the first womb your body was formed without your choice; in this stage your own self undergoes becoming through knowledge, choice, and action. The point of resemblance is becoming within a limited stage in preparation for another origination, not an exact correspondence between

the two worlds: here you are a choosing agent, not a passive embryo. The outward face of this world may deceive you into taking it for a final homeland wide enough for all that is in you; yet even the vastness of the universe does not turn this world into an end. It reminds you instead of how brief a lifetime is beside the other life God has promised.



Lift your gaze a little above the bounds of your day. Our galaxy, the Milky Way, contains what scientists estimate at some one hundred to four hundred billion stars and stretches roughly one hundred thousand light years across. Deep-field images point to hundreds of billions of galaxies in the observable universe; a study published in 2016, after accounting for faint galaxies we cannot see directly, reached an estimate approaching two trillion. The observable universe spans roughly ninety-two billion light years in diameter.^[4]

And with all this vastness, science has no reliable estimate of the size of the whole universe, and cannot say whether it is finite or infinite. These numbers do not measure the hereafter;

but they stretch the imagination that receives its promise: what seems too vast for you to conceive is not the end of existence, and the world that absorbs you is only a limited stage of a farther journey.

Then read God's words about a single garden among the gardens of the hereafter: 'and a garden whose breadth is the heavens and the earth, prepared for the God-conscious'

(Q 3:133).

Consider the expression: 'whose breadth is the heavens and the earth'. The verse gives us no geometric measurement of the Garden; but it widens the reader's horizon beyond the bounds of the familiar world, and it establishes that what God has prepared for the God-conscious exceeds what our imagination can hold. And this world, however great it appears, remains a stage of work, not the final abode of recompense.

God says: 'This worldly life is nothing but diversion and play; surely the abode of the hereafter — that is the life indeed, if only they knew' (Q 29:64).

Pause at the word rendered 'the life indeed' — in Arabic, al-ḥayawān, an intensive form of the word for life. It is as though the Qur'an says to you: do not be deceived by this life's motion and noise, for real life has not yet begun. What you count as life is only a temporary phase, closer to passing play inside a great womb.

The words of the Commander of the Faithful, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (peace be upon him), condense this meaning by calling us to take provisions from this place of passage for the abiding home: this world is a place of passage and work, not a place of final residence.^[5] Whoever sees it in this way does not despise

it; they recognise its worth as the unrepeatable opportunity for the self's becoming and for working towards the encounter with God.

Because the embryo knows nothing of the world outside the womb, it cannot understand why its organs are taking shape. You, however, have been told. You have been told that you are in a stage of becoming, that a dwelling has been prepared for you, and you have been shown something of the qualities of its people and the conditions of entry. Here your path diverges from the embryo's: its becoming unfolds without its knowing, whereas yours unfolds with awareness. It has no choice in what it will become; you participate, through your will and choices and within what God has enabled you to do, in shaping the existential form with which you will enter the hereafter — preceded by God's creation, guidance, aid, and tawfiq, never independently: 'By the self and the One who proportioned it, then inspired it with its depravity and its God-consciousness: the one who purifies it has truly succeeded, and the one who debases it has truly failed'

(Q91:7-10).

The organs of your body were completed in the first womb without effort from you; the perfections of the self do not take root in this womb without your striving and God's guidance and aid. Perfections and qualities take shape within the self: patience, truthfulness, generosity, modesty, gratitude, contentment, and ihsan. These perfections interact with your response to truth and so contribute to nearness to God or distance from him. Nearness is not another isolated quality on the list, but the relation that orders the perfections and orientation. These are not anatomical organs, but they enter your acquired existential form. You will enter true life with them

— or with their weakness or absence. Time in this stage is limited, and the moment of birth will come whether or not you are ready.

Why Is This World Not Enough for You?

Why, when you reach what you thought was the goal, does the excitement fade so quickly and the emptiness return? Why does money not satisfy once attained, position once secured, or achievement once realised? Why do your finest moments seem somehow incomplete, as though they stop just short of fullness? And why, however full your hands, does that hidden sense return that there is a space within you nothing you own can reach?

The answer, in its simplest form, is that what is within you is larger than what is around you.

Larger — not because you are greater than the world, or because there is a portion of the divine in you, but because material needs and passing successes do not exhaust the human purpose. There is in you a receptivity for knowledge, servanthood, love, and meaning, and it continues to seek an end higher than everything that perishes. The world fulfils its function when it gives you a field for work, learning, and relationship; by itself, however, it cannot answer the final question: for whom do you live, and where are you going?

Imagine placing an ocean fish in a glass of water. The glass contains water, the fish can breathe, and the temperature is suitable. Yet one fact remains: this is not its natural home. The problem is not that the glass is defective, but that it is too small for the life the fish was made to live. The same is true of

the world in relation to your spirit. It gives you what you need to survive, but it cannot give you what you need for completion.

For this reason we do not ask of the world a perfection it was not made for. Grief may last; a wound may leave a trace that never wholly fades; there may be moments of genuine, overflowing joy. But none of that, by itself, becomes the entire meaning of existence. This worldly life is changeable, and the human being within it needs treatment, companionship, remembrance, and work — not the denial of their pain, nor a demand that their wounds heal on schedule.

From here we can understand something of how people move through life. Some seek money, standing, or pleasure for the security, freedom, or recognition these give; and these are real needs, not reducible to illusion. The error begins when the limited thing is asked to give the heart a final meaning, or when the means turns into the measure of all worth.

God says: ‘But whoever turns away from my remembrance will have a straitened life, and on the Day of Resurrection we shall raise him blind’ (Q 20:124).

Consider the meaning of straitness: the hand need not be empty for life to feel constricted. Al-Mizān and al-Amthal explain how a person may live in abundance, yet find life narrowed by their anxious pursuit of what they are attached to and their fear for it. They find no rest in what they have, but continue seeking what they do not have or fearing the loss of what they do. The problem here is not wealth or standing, but that either should become the reference governing the heart and its choices. This is one interpretation of the straitness of turning away from God’s guidance, not a restriction of the

verse's meaning to the constriction of the wealthy, nor a judgement upon every successful person who feels empty. Pain alone does not establish that a person has turned away, just as calm alone does not establish the soundness of their orientation.^[6]

By contrast, God says of those connected to him: 'those who believe and whose hearts find tranquillity in the remembrance of God — surely, in the remembrance of God hearts find tranquillity' (Q 13:28).

The verse places remembrance at the heart of tranquillity: 'surely, in the remembrance of God hearts find tranquillity'. And remembrance is wider than repeating a formula: it is God's presence and his authority in awareness, heart, and intention. It does not abolish treatment, need, or means; but it keeps the heart from making some changeable cause the lord of its serenity.

You are not here to find complete rest, but to discover the road towards it. You are not here to fill the emptiness with whatever lies at hand, but to understand where true fullness comes from. Nor were you created to live a complete life in this world, but to realise that you were created for another life in which the meaning of your existence reaches fulfilment. The longer you seek your completion in this world, the longer your sense of being lost within it lasts. The spirit is not satisfied by enjoyment alone, but by meaning; not filled by possession alone, but by connection; not brought to rest by things alone, but by certainty: 'And this worldly life is nothing but the enjoyment of delusion' (Q 57:20).

Consider the word 'delusion' (ghurūr) in the verse. Delusion is not a direct lie; a lie is being told what is not true. Delusion is being offered something true in itself, presented to you as

more than it is. The world is enjoyment — that is true. The illusion begins when you suppose it an enjoyment that can satisfy you fully, or one that lasts, or one that is the end rather than the means. The problem is not that you enjoy the world; it is that you believe its enjoyment is your final homeland.

Not every lack you feel is evidence of corruption in you, just as not every constriction is a spiritual sign. There may be in your life a real need, an illness, an injustice, or a relationship in need of repair. Yet even after these causes have been given their due, there remains in the human being a question that things alone do not answer: the question of purpose and encounter. And it is this that restores the world to its proper place, neither despised nor worshipped.

So What Are You Doing Here?

If this world is not the abode of final settlement, what is its function? The book does not answer that the human being needs pain for its own sake, nor that every event is designed as a personal lesson. The clearest answer is that this world is the abode of moral obligation and becoming. Here knowledge is disclosed in choice, repeated choice becomes a settled quality, and orientation is revealed through action.

The metaphor of “spiritual organs” is useful so long as it remains a metaphor. Patience, truthfulness, mercy, and certainty are not anatomical organs; they are perfections that are not carried into the hereafter like possessions, but become a configuration within the self. You are not asked to create them from nothing, but to cultivate receptivities God has granted you, remove what veils them, and ask him for tawfiq.

God says: ‘He who created death and life to test you as to which of you is best in deed’ (Q 67:2). The trial here places action in the field of disclosure and responsibility — not because God needs to learn, but because what is present only in potential becomes actual through time, and because human beings come to know themselves when they choose and face the effects of their choices.

Resistance may allow powers to appear that do not appear in ease alone: courage in fear, patience in hardship, and justice in the possession of power. But that is a possibility, not an automatic result. Pain can wound and may require treatment; injustice must be repelled; illness is not to be sought for the sake of growth. What enters into the self’s becoming is its response and the patterns it repeats — not pain as pain.

The first generation saw this meaning with their own eyes. Khabbāb ibn al-Aratt came to the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) who lay with a cloak folded beneath his head in the shade of the Ka‘ba, and asked, ‘Will you not seek help for us? Will you not pray for us?’ The Prophet reminded them of the severe harm believers before them had endured without being turned from their religion, then swore that God would bring this matter to completion, and cautioned them against haste.^[7]

He did not promise that the pressure would lift the next morning, nor did he deny their pain; he steadied their orientation within the pain. The pressure itself did not create their faith, but revealed its mettle. The patience and steadfastness they chose became part of what they were and were preserved for them with God.

Hence the standard: ‘best in deed’ — not merely busiest in action. Excellence of deed joins the soundness of the act, the truthfulness of the intention, and exertion to the full extent of one’s practical scope. A small deed in its right place may weigh more than a great deal of noise; but this does not make intention a substitute for duty, or for doing the work well.

The Qur’an describes the human being’s movement towards their Lord as *kadh*: ‘O human being, you are labouring towards your Lord with strenuous labour, and you will encounter him’ (Q 84:6). *Kadh* is the existential movement inseparable from human life: through time, every human being moves towards the encounter with God and their final destiny before him. What the person becomes along this path — nearer or farther from God, more complete or more deficient — depends on what takes shape within them and on the orientation of their response to truth, in light of the clarification they have received and within their practical scope. Effort may mingle with hope, and success with stumbling, but these are experiences within *kadh*, not its definition. What matters is that effort not be spent without orientation, and that striving become servanthood and *tazkiya* rather than depletion of the self.

Your task, then, goes deeper than gathering wealth or standing — without making these things blameworthy in themselves. They may be useful trusts and fields of service. But the questions that govern them are: what are they cultivating within you? For what purpose do you use them? And what remains of you after they pass away?

The answer does not lie in the shape of the world alone, but in the form in which you leave it. Circumstances, possessions, and titles change; what becomes settled within the self —

knowledge, character, and orientation — enters the acquired existential form and becomes part of what you will meet God with.

This is “the immortal self”: the one human person whose single human self grounds personal identity and who continues after death, sustained by God, carrying the knowledge, loves, intentions, settled dispositions, and orientation that have taken shape within them. It is neither the acquired existential form alone nor a self independent of God. The self undergoes becoming through what you were given, what befell you, and what you chose. Each day, within what God has enabled you to do — and with his guidance and aid preceding your effort — you participate, according to your knowledge, intention, choice, and practical scope, in shaping your shakila and acquired existential form.

Consider your day yesterday: a meeting that showed how you use power, a word that revealed the quickness of your anger, a responsibility that gave you the chance to honour a commitment. The event alone does not deliver the final verdict on you; but it gives you material for self-accounting: what did you choose? And which path did you make easier by repetition?

You began with fitra, receptivities, and givens that were not all of your own choosing; and you will meet God with a self your choices and deeds helped shape. You do not bear the guilt of a beginning you did not choose, nor do you own the whole outcome; but you are responsible for what you knew, what you could do, what you accepted, and what you continued to nourish.

So the strategic questions of your life become: what knowledge do I seek? Which trait of character do I seek to establish? What relationship with God orders my work? And who am I when the titles and possessions fall away? These are not questions for an idle hour; they are the questions that give every other hour its direction.

Time: Your Raw Material

If this world is the field of your becoming, time is its raw material. It is not merely a sequence of seconds subtracted from your lifetime, but the medium of the self's becoming. In the first womb, your body was formed through time; in the second, your knowledge, will, and habits gradually take shape through it. Every passing day leaves a trace, light or heavy, even when you do not see that trace as it is made.

But when the human being forgets their true homeland, they fall into a deep illusion that governs their whole relation to time: they suppose that time works against them. They watch the years pass and feel that the years are stealing something from them — that advancing age is a silent loss, and that what passes never returns. They look in the mirror each year with a measure of fear, and at the calendar with a measure of dread, as though time were an adversary pursuing them, or a race they fear to lose. This picture becomes an illusion when it reduces time to an opponent whose only function is to take.

Time works neither for you nor against you apart from your action; it is the medium in which responses accumulate. An experience may yield practical knowledge; it may remain a wound in need of treatment; a blessing may pass without gratitude. Time does not guarantee maturity, but it grants you the chance of repetition, review, and repair. And what

remains of the past is not always insight: it may be a habit, or a painful trace — which is why memory needs meaning and care, not the glorification of everything that happened.

For this reason God swore by time itself: ‘By time: surely the human being is in loss, except those who believe, perform righteous deeds, counsel one another to truth, and counsel one another to patience’ (Q103:1–3).

Three short verses condense the human being’s relation to time. The starting condition is loss because life passes and does not stop; the verses then make an exception for those who make this passing a field for faith, righteous action, and mutual counsel to truth and patience. Not every passing moment is a moral loss, but finite time passes in any case. What gives it meaning is the truth and righteous action a person plants within it.

If you want a more exact measure of time’s worth, set your whole lifetime beside eternity. Every finite span, however long it seems from within, appears minute when measured against what has no end. Fifty years, or eighty, or even a thousand — a short time before eternity. The Qur’an conveys this very meaning through the words of the people of the hereafter: ‘He will say: how many years did you remain on earth? They will say: we remained a day, or part of a day — ask those who keep count. He will say: you remained only a little, if only you had known’ (Q23:112–114).

The years of your life that now seem long and extended will contract, after death, into ‘a day, or part of a day’. Not because they did not exist, but because they really are short when measured against eternity. They seemed long only because you were inside them. When you leave them and look at them from outside, you will see them as they are: a passing stage.

This is why the criterion set by Sūrat al-‘Aṣr is decisive, not figurative: the time you waste comes not from an inexhaustible reserve, but from one that was limited to begin with.

So look closely at your day. How many hours did you spend on what drains you without building you: distraction, mindless scrolling, brooding, futile argument, and anxiety that produces nothing? And how many hours on what genuinely adds to you? The question is hard; but it is a Qur’anic question, because the Qur’an treats time as the most precious material in your hands.

Yet kadh, in the Qur’anic understanding, is not confined to prescribed worship or remembrance in seclusion; every movement already takes place within this path. Any beneficial activity can become a conscious response on the road of servanthood and nearness when placed in its proper setting: professional work, reading, learning, a word that lightens another person’s sorrow, maintaining family ties, reflecting on God’s creation, acquiring a new skill — even sleep and rest, when they restore your strength for a return to action. God says: ‘Seek, through what God has given you, the abode of the hereafter, and do not forget your portion of this world’

(Q 28:77).

Consider the balance of the verse: it does not divide the abode of the hereafter from your portion of this world, but joins them within a single movement. It then follows immediately with: ‘and do good, as God has done good to you’. It is as though the Qur’an reorders the whole picture: the hereafter, this world, and doing good are not three opposing roads, but different dimensions of one movement when its direction is sound.

The true criterion, then, is not the kind of activity alone, but its place on your map. For the one who makes the encounter with God their purpose, earning a livelihood becomes worship, learning becomes a way of drawing near to God, rest becomes preparation, and relationships become a door to maturity and doing good. For the one who makes this world their purpose, even remembrance can turn into habit, prayer into routine, and almsgiving into cold accounting. The inner orientation gives movement its meaning; and action discloses its truthfulness.

So the question at the end of your day is not only, ‘How much did I remember God?’ but also, ‘Where did my deeds stand in relation to my orientation?’ A permissible deed may become worship when its intention is sound, its performance upright, the trust it involves is honoured, and it leads to no neglect of duty. Servanthood is the orientation by which life is ordered; worship is its intentional and practical embodiment in rites, acts of obedience, and lawful work directed to God. Worship also needs sincerity and presence if it is to yield its full effect in the self. No comparison between the two is valid if it cancels an obligation or makes good intention a substitute for the sound form of the act.

Time, in the end, is your raw material. In it you take part, day after day, in shaping the self you will become.

In Closing

We began this chapter with the question the introduction left open: if the book of God grants you the exalted standing you saw there, why do you feel so small, scattered, and constricted in your daily life? Now, after walking this road together, the answer becomes quietly clear.

You are not in your final homeland.

This metaphor presents the world as a second womb — immeasurably wider than the first, yet temporary like it. Just as the first womb was not a permanent home for the embryo, this world is not a permanent home for you. When it closes in on you despite all its breadth, do not rush to a single verdict about the cause. You may need to address your circumstances or seek treatment for a psychological or physical condition; the constriction may also awaken you to the question of purpose. Time is not simply an adversary; it is the medium in which the self that will meet God undergoes becoming.

This, in its simplest form, is what we have tried to understand: this world is a stage of becoming, time is the medium of transformation, and you have a responsible part in shaping the self with which you will leave this stage. You were not created for this world as a final end; you came to undergo becoming within it. No one can choose in your place or carry the responsibility for what you accept, continue to nourish, and repeat.

When this understanding settles, the way you look at yourself, your work, your relationships, and your time changes. Things cease to be mere possessions and become sites of testing and formation: what does this work do within you? Which orientation does it strengthen? Which quality does it establish?

Nor is this task a secondary option in the Qur'anic vision: *tazkiya* belongs to the core of true success, action is the site of responsibility, and the encounter is coming. So the next chapter turns to 'the neglected obligation' — not to extract a

legal ruling from the verse of kadh alone, but to restore tazkiya to the centre of life, after it has been relegated, for many, to the margins or reduced to a slogan.

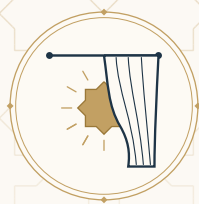
This metaphor presents the world as a second womb: a limited stage of becoming before a wider origination. Unlike the embryo, however, you know that you are in it. Because you know, you bear a share of choice and responsibility. The embryo awaits birth without awareness; you prepare yourself for it. The embryo does not choose the form of the organs with which it will emerge; you participate every day in shaping what you will carry with you. God creates, guides, aids, and grants tawfiq; the human being responds, chooses, and acts. From this interaction, the form the human being carries takes shape. The embryo does not know that light lies beyond the womb; you have been told.

And being told is a responsibility: ‘So whoever wills may remember it; and they will not remember unless God wills’ (Q 74:55–56). You have a real choice at your own level, but it does not stand for a moment outside God’s will and giving. So begin with what you can, and seek help from the One who gave you the capacity.



A Pause for Reflection

Before you go on, linger over the idea of this chapter: that you are in a second womb, in which a self is taking form — the self with which you will emerge into what lies beyond it. What did you establish in that self yesterday? What have you allowed to recur until it has nearly become a disposition? And what small act could you make today the beginning of a new configuration?



Chapter Two —

The Neglected Obligation

After your awareness of the realities of place and time has widened, and the world's noise has grown faint before the expanse of eternity, a question rises within you unlike any you have known. It does not ask 'Where am I?', 'How long will I live?', or 'What awaits me?' It seeks one thing only: what should I do now with this knowledge?

Your realisation that this world is a prelude, that your lifetime is a moment, and that your feelings are temporary does not reach its full meaning until it becomes action. Knowledge that does not change the direction of a life remains a passing thought, however profound it may seem. Here, precisely, the neglected obligation begins.

When the truth of eternity is disclosed to you, its effect is not the same in everyone. One person may continue in familiar habits; another may begin a serious review; a third may waver between the two for a time. Yet the knowledge

creates a new responsibility: to examine your motives and orientation, and not to live as though that knowledge had never reached you.

Awareness alone does not change the human being; change lies in what a person chooses and does in its light. The moment of realisation is not the end, but the beginning of knowledge's movement from the mind into decision.

And before we ask why this obligation has been hidden from the awareness of the contemporary Muslim, we should first ask: what does the Qur'an call it in the first place? For the language the Qur'an uses to describe this obligation does not merely give you its name; it discloses to you its nature, its weight, and the place it occupies within the human being's whole project.

Your Kadh towards Your Lord: Reality and Responsibility

God says: 'O human being, you are labouring towards your Lord with strenuous labour, and you will encounter him' (Q 84:6). In its root meaning, kadh is striving marked by effort that leaves a trace upon the one who strives. In the sense developed in this book, it is the existential movement inseparable from human life: through time, every human being moves towards the encounter with God and their final destiny before him. What the person becomes along this path — nearer or farther from God, more complete or more deficient — depends on what takes shape within them and on the orientation of their response to truth, in light of the clarification they have received and within their practical scope. Voluntary striving describes how you respond within this path; it is not the origin of kadh itself. The verse speaks of the

human being's journey towards the encounter, not of an optional activity that a person could abandon and thereby step outside the course of existence.

The verse states the reality of the journey; by itself, it establishes no independent legal ruling. Read together, however, with the verses that associate *falah* with the *tazkiya* of the self, command righteous action, and hold the human being responsible for choice, it reveals the project that has slipped from awareness: to purify the self and make your response within that journey a conscious response to truth and servanthood.

God says: 'By the self and the One who proportioned it, then inspired it with its depravity and its God-consciousness: the one who purifies it has truly succeeded, and the one who debases it has truly failed' (Q 91:7–10). The verses do not make the self evil in its origin; they establish its openness to both paths, and the human being's responsibility for purifying it or for burying its receptivity to the truth.

It does not follow that every moment is pure ascent or pure descent. A person may hold firm in one respect and fall back in another, and may pass through a period of treatment or incapacity that is not to be measured by the amount of activity. The point is that repetition establishes a direction, and that prolonged neglect is not entirely neutral in its effects.

Then God says: 'He who created death and life to test you as to which of you is best in deed' (Q 67:2). The measure is not the sheer quantity of work, but its excellence: soundness, sincerity, and mastery appropriate to the circumstances. A good intention does not restore a right that has been lost, nor does a correct outward form make up for a heart deliberately seeking display.

The verses converge on one meaning: your life is a movement towards an encounter; the self is open to purification; and action is the site of testing. You are not asked to manufacture an independent self, but to fulfil your responsibility in shaping the self whose origin, capacity, and guidance God has granted you.

Kadh describes the inevitability of the path towards the encounter. Tazkiya describes the positive movement that purifies the self, develops its powers and perfections, and redirects it towards truth. Excellence of deed describes the quality of the response as it appears in the world. When the orientation is sound and the action excellent, the whole day becomes a field of servanthood and becoming.

Kadh does not mean glorifying exhaustion or seeking pain. Resting in order to regain strength, seeking treatment, leaving a source of harm, and redistributing responsibilities may themselves be acts of worship. The value lies not in how tired you become, but in the truthfulness of the orientation and the excellence of action within your practical scope.

In this sense, tazkiya is “the neglected obligation”: not a side exercise for improving one’s image, but a comprehensive duty that makes worship, work, relationships, and wealth fields of human becoming within servanthood.

I use “true success” (falah) here in its Qur’anic sense, which is wider than social success: the deliverance and growth of the self by God’s measure. A person may accomplish much and still fail to attain falah, while an apparently small action may change the person’s existential form in the right direction.

How Was It Hidden from You?

If tazkiya holds this rank, why is it sometimes reduced in common awareness to scattered exhortations or seasonal bouts of striving? And why can a person perform certain acts in abundance while their effect on character and relationships remains weaker than hoped?

The answer is that two veils stand between the human being and this obligation: an inner veil that manufactures illusion within the self, and an outer veil that allows a person to practise religion without entering its meaning. We begin with the first, because outward deviation often begins with a distortion of inward vision.

The First Veil: When Evil Is Made Alluring to You

Often a person does not move towards misguidance because they love misguidance as misguidance, nor do they pursue falsehood while knowing it to be false. They deviate because things are presented to them as something other than they are: they see illusion in the guise of truth, the shadow as light, and what weakens them as what will complete them. The real danger is not that you are deceived once, but that you live inside the deception until you lose the very capacity to see it.

The Qur'an condenses this truth into a single verse that almost summarises a large part of human psychology: '**Satan made their deeds alluring to them and so barred them from the way, and they are not guided**' (Q 27:24). Consider the words "made alluring". The process does not begin with a direct lie, but with embellishment: things are presented out of

proportion, so that they appear more beautiful than they are, closer to your heart than they deserve, and more worthy of pursuit than they should be.

To grasp the danger of this veil, watch a child raging and weeping because they lost a game on a screen, as though their whole destiny hung on its result. You smile, because you see the scene from outside. But do you notice, in the same moment, that many of us do the very same thing when we chase money, appearances, brand names, or social standing, as though they were the final meaning of life?

We belittle the child's game because we are outside it, and we magnify our own because we live inside it. The deeper you are inside the game, the harder it becomes to see that it is a game at all. This is why the Qur'an described the world with such striking frankness: 'Know that the worldly life is only play and diversion' (Q 57:20).

The illusion reaches its peak when it is not content to keep a person off the road, but convinces them that they are on it: 'Say: shall we tell you of the greatest losers in respect of deeds? Those whose striving goes astray in the worldly life while they suppose they are doing well' (Q 18:103–104).

Consider the weight of the phrase: their problem was not merely that they went astray, but that they supposed they were doing well. This is the most dangerous stage of the veil: when deviation turns, in a person's awareness, into a form of rightness — when flight looks like courage, distortion like maturity, and busyness like progress.

Nor does this illusion belong to one group rather than another. A religious person may fall into it, supposing that the sheer quantity of religious activity is enough by itself to purify

the self; and a person successful by the world's measures may fall into it, supposing that what they have gathered in their hands is what they will carry to God.

Because illusion works from within, the self has a large part in sustaining it. When the commanding tendency prevails, the self inclines towards the image that protects desire rather than the truth that exposes it. It wants to appear stronger, richer, more accepted, and more admired than it is; it magnifies what feeds that image and hides what reveals its weakness: 'I do not absolve myself: surely the self persistently commands one to do evil, except where my Lord shows mercy' (Q 12:53).

Forces outside you also sustain and reproduce this illusion. Satan cannot compel you, but he can embellish. He embellishes appetite until it looks like necessity, wealth until it looks like the measure of worth, and appearances until they turn into the measure of existence itself. With every small concession, a little more dust settles on the heart, scarcely felt by its owner: 'No indeed! Rather, what they have been earning has rusted over their hearts' (Q 83:14).

The rust does not arise from a single sin, but from an accumulation of details left unpurified: heedlessness upon heedlessness, concession upon concession, until a person's awareness fades slowly without their noticing.

Among the first steps of tazkiya is to wipe the dust from the mirror of awareness rather than merely multiply one's actions. It means standing before the self in truthfulness and asking: does what I pursue truly raise me, or merely adorn me? Does it carry meaning, or is it only a badge? Does it have

real value, or is it an image that needs an audience to believe in it? An image collapses when the light goes out; meaning remains even after you leave the whole world behind.

The Second Veil: When Worship Is Performed but Not Lived

To understand this veil, begin by distinguishing three meanings. Ontological dependence is a universal reality of every creature. Servanthood is the conscious, chosen orientation in which God is the human being's Lord, highest point of reference, and the end of their striving. Worship is the intentional and practical embodiment of that servanthood in rites, acts of obedience, and lawful works directed to God.

The problem is not that worship has an outward form; that form is part of obedience, and the inward life cannot dispense with it. The problem arises when the form is performed apart from the purpose for which it was legislated, so that presence of heart is not sought and its effect on conduct is not examined. Worship is first God's right and an embodiment of servanthood; its underlying wisdom and its effects include the purification and reordering of the self.

When you stand for prayer, you are not performing a psychological exercise; you stand as a servant before your Lord. Yet this repeated standing draws the whole human being into servanthood: the body through standing and bowing, the heart through intention and humility, the intellect through understanding and reflection, and the spirit through turning to God. When the presence of any of these aspects weakens, worship does not become empty of meaning, but the person must strive so that the self may benefit more fully from its fruit.

When you fast, the aim is not the body's hunger alone, but that the self learn that capacity is not the same as permission, and that desire can be guided. When you give alms, money does not merely leave your hand; your heart re-examines the place wealth holds within it. When you remember God, you do not merely repeat a formula; you renew your orientation amid the demands of life.

Worship, then, is not an outward body to which tazkiya must be added from outside as a spirit. Tazkiya is present within the structure and purposes of worship, and presence of heart together with truthful action opens the self to its fruit. The legislated form carries the meaning, and the meaning gives life to the form; neither is abolished in the name of the other.

Here the connection between worship and your first project appears. You do not perform it on the margins of life; it recurs through your day until it takes part in shaping you: prayer restores the centre, fasting trains the will, almsgiving frees the heart, and remembrance renews the orientation. Yet worship remains an act of servanthood to God before it is considered for the effect it produces within you; the excellence of that effect does not turn it into a technique of self-development.

Consider how the Qur'an gathers these meanings in its description of the human being: 'Surely the human being was created anxiously restless: fretful when evil touches him, withholding when good touches him — except those who pray, who are constant in their prayer' (Q 70:19-23). It then mentions the recognised right in their wealth, belief in the Day of Judgement, guarding chastity, keeping trusts and pledges, upholding testimony, and preserving prayer. The

exception does not end with the outward form of prayer alone; it describes worship that extends into the use of wealth, relationships, and the fulfilment of rights.

This does not mean that those who pray were created without fear or need; their very qualities include apprehension of their Lord's punishment (Q 70:27). Al-Mīzān and al-Amthal explain that the original drive to seek good is a power that can be directed well or badly. Through constancy in worship and truthful action, the self learns not to be ruled by fretfulness and withholding. In this book's reading, that practice contributes to the formation of the shakila — not because repetition alone guarantees virtue, but because it renews the response to God in word and deed.^[8]

Almsgiving, too, is not merely a transfer of money from one hand to another, but an act of inner liberation. God says: 'Take from their wealth a charity by which you purify them and cause them to grow' (Q 9:103).

Consider the expression: "purify them and cause them to grow". The aim is not only to meet the poor person's need, great as that aim is, but also to purify the giver: to free the self from attachment, the illusion of ownership, and the fear of loss. Almsgiving does not move wealth out of the hand alone; it loosens something of the heart's servitude to wealth. With every attachment that falls away, a new place opens in the heart for light.

As for remembrance, it was not legislated to be verbal repetition alone, but to renew the state of inner presence. God says: 'Surely, in the remembrance of God hearts find tranquillity' (Q 13:28). The tranquillity here does not spring from the

words alone, but from God's presence and his authority in awareness, heart, and intention. The tongue may open the door; it is the heart that must enter.

For this reason it is not right to treat acts of worship as temporary bridges you cross and then dispense with once their effect has been attained. They are a permanent bond with God, a renewal of the pledge, and an occasion for acknowledging dependence and seeking help. The fruit of worship in the self may weaken; its remedy is not to discard the form, but to join sound performance with inward striving.

Of the sacrificial offering, one of the greatest outward rites of the pilgrimage, God says: 'Neither their flesh nor their blood reaches God; rather, what reaches him is your God-consciousness' (Q 22:37). The verse does not abolish the rite; it discloses that its legislated form carries an inward purpose, which is God-consciousness.

This does not mean that everyone who performs an act of worship attains the same formative effect, nor that we can judge whether people's deeds are accepted. It means that worship has an outward form legislated by God and an inward life of presence and sincerity. The human being preserves the outward form and seeks to keep the inward life alive, without making personal feeling the measure of worship's validity.

There are times when a person performs the obligatory act with little presence. They do not abandon or despise it; they return through it to God and ask him to give it life within the heart. Worship itself is one of the doors of divine aid: you perform the act to the extent of your ability and ask God to make you steadfast, accept it from you, and make it a cause of your tazkiya.

A person may perform many outward acts while their effect remains small; another act may be modest but constant and open a door within the self. We do not measure acceptance by what we feel, but we do examine the fruit that the revealed law itself names: does prayer restrain you from indecency and wrong? Does almsgiving yield purification? Do truthfulness, mercy, and trustworthiness increase in conduct?

In sum, worship is the embodiment of servanthood which, by God's grace and through repeated obedience, contributes to the human being's tazkiya and becoming. It is not reduced to a psychological effect, nor severed from its formative effect. Its legislated form is preserved, the presence of its meaning is sought, and its truthfulness appears in righteous action, mercy, justice, and trustworthiness. When obedience and sincerity come together, the whole human being enters the path of tazkiya.^[9]

Why Has the Self-Help Library Not Filled the Gap?

If the obligation of tazkiya has receded from much traditional religious discourse, it has reappeared — in a different form — in another corner of contemporary life: the self-help library. Enter a bookshop and you find whole shelves devoted to building character, realising potential, and becoming a better version of yourself. Turn to your phone and you are flooded with clips from coaches and motivators promising success, inner peace, hidden power, and dramatic transformation.

A natural question arises here: is this not, in essence, an attempt to fill the void left by the absence of tazkiya? Is it not a call to develop the self and raise it?

The honest answer: yes... and no.

Yes, because this library holds genuinely useful things: time-management skills, the arts of communication, techniques of habit-building, methods of discipline, and ways of dealing with emotions and goals. Many of these tools can serve within the project of tazkiya if placed within its proper framework.

The deeper answer, however, remains no: the gap left by the absence of tazkiya was not a gap in skills but a gap in orientation. That orientation is absent from many offerings in this field, though not from all of them.

Consider phrases that recur in some versions of this discourse: “you possess limitless power”; “the universe responds to what you believe”; “discover your inner greatness”; “you are the centre of your reality”. Notice where they place the self: it becomes hero, centre, and final end, while the universe is imagined as answering its desire. Here the essential difference appears between Qur’anic tazkiya and some widespread Western forms of self-development.

Some models of self-development end with the self as the final purpose, while others raise questions of meaning and service. The governing distinction in this book is not the name of the field, but its reference and end: is the skill placed in the service of truth and servanthood, or do human capacity and self-image become a new object of worship?

Because the starting point is different, the whole road changes, and so does its final fruit.

Because the two frameworks resemble each other on the surface — both speak of “becoming better” — many readers confuse them. A person acquires the techniques and assumes that they have embraced the obligation itself. They memorise

the steps of habit-building, the laws of discipline, or the methods of success, and imagine that this is the kadh of which the Qur'an speaks.

The pursuit of "better" within a map that ends at the self often leads to further inflation of the self. The pursuit of better within a map that ends at God leads instead towards greater sincerity towards him and greater freedom from everything besides him.

This is why many people leave that library with more achievements but no greater sense of fulfilment. One succeeds at work, then discovers an emptiness they cannot explain. Another reaches a goal awaited for years, only for the exhilaration to dissolve quickly. Another builds a successful image of themselves, then collapses inwardly when that image is shaken.

This is not a failure of the techniques themselves, but a sign that the self was created for something deeper than its own development. As you saw in the first chapter, you are in a second womb. The embryo is not completed by expanding within the womb, but by emerging into the world for which it was formed.

This is why God says: 'Have you seen the one who takes his desire as his god, and God has led him astray upon knowledge?' (Q 45:23). Taking desire as a god does not necessarily mean abandoning religion altogether. It may mean making the self the final reference for everything one does, and making its development and magnification the highest aim of life. A person in this condition may indeed possess "knowledge": they read, learn, and have tools, skills, and techniques. The problem is not always a lack of knowledge, but a

map that places the self where only God belongs. This makes the misguidance more dangerous, for it wears the appearance of awareness rather than the simplicity of ignorance.

In the end, a person finds themselves wavering between two shores, each incomplete: one offers ritual without spirit, leaving them without the inward meaning of worship; the other offers development without orientation, leaving them without the ultimate meaning of their existence. The first teaches them to act without understanding why; the second teaches them to advance without knowing where.

The neglected obligation is what joins the two: movement guided by an awareness of its meaning, and an orientation whose destination is clear.

Where Do You Stand in Relation to Your Own Self?

Kadh needs an orientation, and tazkiya needs knowledge of the state from which you begin. But the Qur'an does not give us a rigid technical ladder of four independent 'selves'; it describes the one human self by states and attributes that change according to what prevails in it.

It may command evil when desire takes hold and the inner impulse outruns reflection. It may be reproaching, when the capacity to object to its own wrong awakens in it. And it reaches tranquillity when its orientation to God settles, so that fluctuations no longer enslave it. As for the inspiration in God's words, 'then inspired it with its depravity and its God-consciousness' (Q 91:8), it indicates that the self has been taught the two paths and is capable of telling them apart; it does not require us to make it the name of an independent stage called 'the inspired self'.

The Commanding Self: When Desire Prevails

God says, through the words of the wife of al-‘Azīz: ‘Surely the self persistently commands one to do evil, except where my Lord shows mercy’ (Q 12:53). The description does not mean that the self is evil in essence, but that it can press its bearer towards immediate gratification when left without tazkiya, renaming desire as necessity and fear as wisdom.

The description “commanding self” is not a final verdict on the human being. It may show itself in one respect and weaken in another; and a person can see it, oppose it, and ask for the mercy named in the verse’s exception.

The Reproaching Self: The Awakening of Review

God says: ‘And no! I swear by the reproaching self’ (Q 75:2). Truthful reproach is not contempt for oneself, but the self’s protest against the separation of an action from the truth already known. Repair begins when the wrong is named without despair and without justification.

Reproach can become fruitless self-punishment when it circles around condemnation and never reaches repentance or repair. The function of the reproaching self is to disclose the path and urge a return, not to hold a person captive to the self-image “I am bad”.

Inspiration and Insight: Knowing the Two Paths

Fitra bears an immediate, general awareness of truth, an original love of perfection, and an orientation towards servanthood; it is not detailed acquired knowledge. Revelation comes to clarify, the intellect to discern, and tazkiya to lift the veils. With tazkiya, some truths may disclose themselves more quickly; but this insight neither makes intuition infallible nor dispenses with evidence. Whatever comes to the heart is tested against revelation, the intellect, and the effects it produces in action.

A person may know the road and not walk it, and may walk part of it with effort before their heart inclines to it. So we do not make clarity of feeling the measure of the stage; the measure is what the self adopts, chooses, and repeats.

The Tranquil Self: The Serenity of Orientation

God says: ‘O tranquil self, return to your Lord, well pleased and well pleasing’ (Q 89:27-28). Tranquillity is not the absence of grief and fear, but a graduated formative station of the heart arising from settled knowledge of God and remembrance of him, servanthood to him, and the self’s firm grounding in God as its ultimate point of reference. It is an original fruit and a real manifestation of nearness, without becoming an outward measure for ranking people; fluctuations may remain without uprooting the self from servanthood.

The Commander of the Faithful, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (peace be upon him), embodied the meaning of sufficiency when he called his companions to help him with scrupulousness,

exertion, restraint, and uprightness — not to imitate his manner of living literally. The deepest wealth is the self's wealth in God, together with discharging what is due and caring for the body.^[10]

These descriptions are not islands one leaves behind forever. A person may be tranquil in one respect and still on the road of striving in another, and reproach may wake them after heedlessness. The point is that the overall course should tend towards the settling of servanthood, and that the return to truth should become quicker and more truthful.

Your First Project — Everything Else Branches from It

After all this, one practical question remains, and there is no escaping it: if tazkiya is the core of your journey, where does it fit within your already crowded day? How do you practise it amid work, family, commitments, appointments, fatigue, and responsibilities that scarcely leave a gap in your day? Here the common mistake occurs.

Many people treat tazkiya as an additional task that must compete with all the other tasks in the schedule — another hour added to an already exhausting day. But tazkiya is not meant to be squeezed into the schedule; it is meant to reorder the schedule as a whole.

Consider your day calmly. You work for your livelihood, build your family life, think about your future, look after your health, keep up with your relatives and friends, and try to run your life as well as you can. These are the projects of your daily life; each one demands time and effort, and each has its natural place in your life.

But one project remains — for most people — absent amid this crowding: the becoming of the self with which you will meet God.

Ask the question truthfully: what place does this project occupy in your awareness? Do you confine it to scattered minutes, then live the rest of the day with no connection to it? Those minutes are useful; but they are not enough to build a path of tazkiya if work, relationships, and wealth remain outside the orientation.

The self's becoming is not an activity you practise for an hour and then close down. It is a framework that gives meaning to all the remaining hours. When this understanding changes, the question changes with it. It is no longer, "When do I purify myself?" but, "How do I make what I already do part of my purification?"

Here the Qur'anic answer comes with striking precision: 'Seek, through what God has given you, the abode of the hereafter, and do not forget your portion of this world' (Q 28:77). Consider the word 'through'.

God did not say: leave what he has given you and seek the hereafter somewhere else. Nor did he say: take this world and leave the hereafter to the people of worship. He said: seek the hereafter through what he has given you — from inside your livelihood, inside your work, inside your family, inside your health, inside the very details of your life.

Intention gives an act its orientation, but it does not make every form of action sound. A good intention cannot make an unjust act right or excuse the neglect of a duty, just as a sound outward form does not suffice when the motive is display or arrogance. An act is truthful when purpose and form are upright together, each giving expression to the other.

Consider two employees performing the same task. One sees only a salary and how they appear to the manager; the other seeks lawful provision, safeguards people's rights, and fulfils the trust placed in them with excellence. The outward action looks the same, but what it builds within each self differs. Even so, a good intention does not make a corrupt act right, cancel a right, or replace competence; it gives sound work its orientation and spirit.

The outward work is the same, but the two maps differ completely. One person spends their hours building up a return for this world alone; the other spends them building up both returns together. God says: 'Whoever desires the reward of this world — with God is the reward of this world and the hereafter; and God is All-Hearing, All-Seeing'

(Q 4:134).

Consider the verse's precision. The reward of this world is with God, and he grants it to one who seeks it. God can also join for a person the good of this world and the hereafter. The real difference is not in the extent of the striving, but in what the person seeks through that striving and in the orientation of their heart.

That is why the verse closes with "and God is All-Hearing, All-Seeing": a reminder that intention is not lost, even when hidden from other people and, at times, from the person who carries it.

From here the true ordering of life becomes clear. The centre is not your profession, family, or self treated as an independent end. The centre is servanthood to God, and the self is a trust purified within it: 'the one who purifies it has truly succeeded, and the one who debases it has truly failed'

(Q 91:9–10).

When servanthood settles at the centre of your awareness, everything else takes its place: your profession becomes a field of trust, the family a place of mercy and responsibility, wealth a means and not an identity, and rest a right and a preparation rather than a perpetual escape.

Then tazkiya ceases to be an activity isolated from life and becomes a way of doing what is required of you. It retains its specific works of worship, self-accounting, and the seeking of knowledge, but its effect extends into the rest of the day instead of being confined to one corner of it.

Tazkiya is not a war on the self, nor a project to break it. It is a path of purifying the self from veils and vices, cultivating its powers and perfections, and redirecting it towards truth and servanthood through God's guidance and aid. It takes the self by the hand towards its possible completion: exposing what misleads it, treating what has wounded it, resisting what enslaves it, and cultivating in it what brings it nearer to God and makes it more truthful, more merciful, and stronger in the truth.

What Happens within You When You Walk the Path?

It may seem to you, after all that has passed in this chapter, that the road is long and demanding. We have spoken of kadh, tazkiya, the veils, the orientation, the map of the self, and the reordering of life from within. And it may occur to you as you read: what does a person gain from all this striving? What actually happens when they set out on this road?

The first change is not outward but inward. No sudden upheaval transforms the world around you, and life does not suddenly open into an ideal reality. People remain people,

work remains work, pressure does not disappear, and losses do not cease. Yet something begins to take shape quietly in your depths, accumulating almost unnoticed until it becomes a new way of seeing life as a whole.

Consider what may happen when you understand that your work is not merely a means of livelihood, but a field of trust. The tasks may not change, but your standard changes: you render what is due, you learn, you set boundaries against injustice, and you no longer make people's approval alone the measure of your worth. The pressure may remain; meaning does not abolish it, but keeps it from being purposeless.

Not because you have become superhuman, but because your inner centre has begun to move from this world to God. Your attachment to results no longer consumes you as it did; you have begun to see that you work and use the available means, while results do not stand independently of God's governance.

When you understand that your family is not only a space of rest or duty, but also a field of mercy, justice, and patience, your options widen. Not every injury becomes a "beautiful opportunity", and harm is not to be accepted in the name of *tazkiya*. You seek instead a response that stops the harm without establishing a matching harshness within you.

So too with wealth. When you understand that it is a trust rather than an identity, you become less afraid of it and less fearful of losing it. This is not because you have come to hate wealth or deny its value, but because you have returned it to its proper place. It is no longer a master governing your anxiety, but a tool in your hand, to be used well and then entrusted to God.

All these small transformations are held together by a stable reference to God and a steady orientation towards him. This is a graduated tranquillity that may coexist with pressure and pain, and a person may still need treatment, practical means, and companionship. Such stability does not mean that losses disappear or life becomes free of disturbance. It means that your centre is no longer suspended from what changes quickly; it has come to rest somewhere deeper than the fluctuations of the market, and more firmly grounded than the shifting moods of people and changes in circumstances.

This is the meaning the Qur'an points to when it says: 'those who believe and whose hearts find tranquillity in the remembrance of God — surely, in the remembrance of God hearts find tranquillity' (Q13:28).

The verse does not promise perpetual worldly victory, or a calm feeling at every moment. It roots tranquillity in remembrance and connection with God; and the heart may still need treatment, time, and companionship before it recovers its capacity for stillness.

Pain and tranquillity may coexist, just as a believer may be shaken and seek someone's help. Tranquillity is not a façade to be performed; it is a fruit that grows when fluctuations are not allowed to become a reason for severing the bond with God or abandoning what is required of you.

But this is not the journey's end; it is its first threshold — the beginning of a longer transformation whose tools and dimensions we will approach in the coming chapters. What should settle in your awareness now, before you leave this chapter, is that tazkiya is not an ideal to be recited, but a path

that brings real change. Every step on it leaves something within you, and every truthful movement slowly reshapes the self — even before it reaches its greatest fruit in the hereafter.

In Closing

We began this chapter with the question left open by the first: once you know the truth, where do you begin?

Having travelled this road, we can now see the answer clearly. Tazkiya is not an additional item on the list of your life; it is the frame that reorders the whole list. What the Qur'an calls 'tazkiya' is not a movement added to your life, but a course that redirects it from within.

We saw how this obligation disappeared behind two veils: an inner veil that manufactures illusion within the self, and an outer veil that lets a person perform worship without entering its meaning. We saw, too, why the self-help library has not been able to close this gap, for all its useful tools: because its map, most often, ends at the self, while the map of tazkiya sets out from the self — to reach God.

Then we saw the Qur'an's descriptions of the self: commanding when desire prevails, reproaching when review awakens, tranquil when the orientation settles; and we saw that the inspiration indicates knowledge of the two paths and the capacity to distinguish them, not a rigid technical ladder.

When this centre settles in a person's awareness, everything else begins to order itself around it. Work finds its meaning, relationships theirs, wealth its place, and time its value. And the fruit of the road begins to appear in this world before the hereafter: a tranquillity that grows quietly within and gives

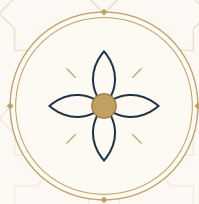
life a new shape even before its circumstances change. Thus we have returned this obligation to its natural place on your map.

One question remains to open the next stage: if the self is your first trust within servanthood, in which aspects does its activity appear? How do spirit, heart, intellect, and the bodily dimension interweave within one human being? This is the gateway to the next chapter: your four dimensions.



A Pause for Reflection

Before you close this chapter, stand before its most searching question: if the self is your first project, and everything else branches from it, where does this project stand in the actual ordering of your day — not in your ideal ordering? Which of the projects to which you give your time serve the self with which you will meet your Lord, and which proceed in isolation from it, as though you would never be asked about them?



Chapter Three —

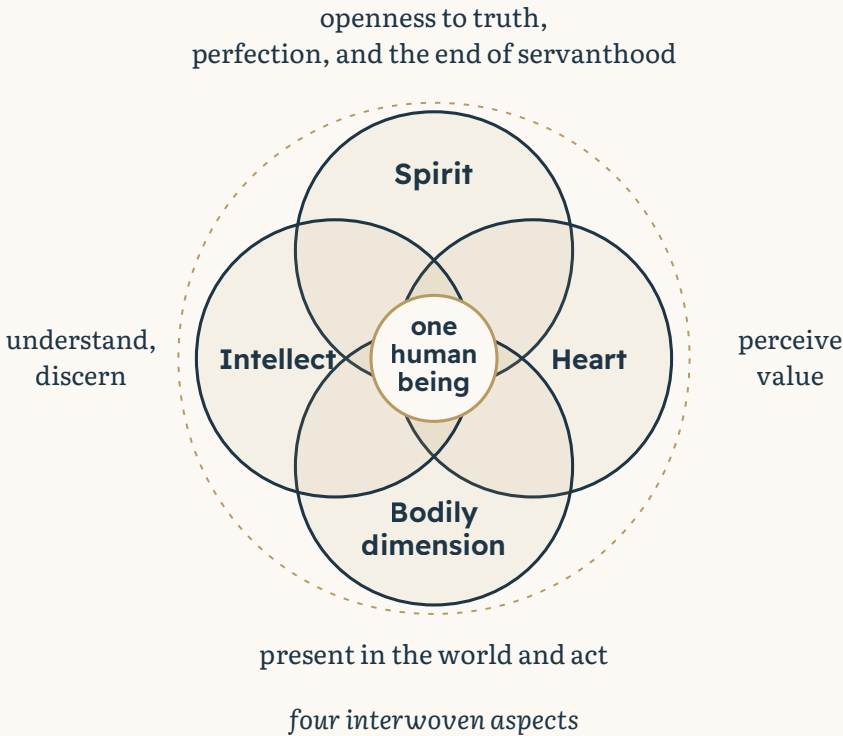
Your Four Dimensions

We closed the previous chapter with an idea that governs this whole journey: the self is your first project. But what is this self that is purified and changed? Are the bodily dimension, heart, intellect, and spirit four things set side by side?

You are not four beings assembled together. You are one human being, but your unity is rich, and the presence and activity of the self in this life can be read through four interwoven aspects: a bodily dimension, through which you are present in the world and act; a heart, through which you perceive value, accept, love, intend, and turn; an intellect, through which you understand, discern, reason, judge, and review; and a spirit, meaning the self considered in its spiritual rank and its openness to truth, perfection, and the end of servanthood. The word “spirit” is used here in this functional sense within the map, not as a comprehensive definition of every use of the term in the texts. These aspects are equally

valid as windows of analysis, but they are not parts, separate selves, or adjacent substances; nor are they identical in their mode of existence.

This map is a tool for understanding, not a final division of human existence. It helps us see different aspects of the self’s activity, then returns them to their unity. If it turns into four adjacent boxes, it hides the very human being it was meant to clarify.



The Self: One Subject in the Process of Becoming

The self is not a fifth dimension added to these aspects. It is the one human self in the process of becoming: the subject that knows, wills, chooses, and acts. Within it, motives, intentions, habits, and decisions interact; from it, reform or deviation begins.

When the Qur'an describes it as commanding, reproaching, or tranquil, we are not speaking of multiple selves inside the human being, but of states of the one self, according to what prevails in it and where it turns. It is not evil in its origin, nor a synonym for desire; it is capable of being purified or of deviating, and of acquiring over time a configuration that develops into a settled shakila.

This is the meaning that preserves both your responsibility and the continuity of your identity. You are the same person who is ignorant and then learns, weakens and then grows strong, errs and then repents. No other self is substituted for you at every transformation; it is the one self that changes, carries the history of its choices, and can redirect its course.

Spirit and Fitra: The Spiritual Rank and the Mode of Creation

The effect of the spirit is not confined to moments of explicit worship. It also appears in the restlessness that achievement cannot silence, in your attraction to beauty that offers no direct utility, and in your question about meaning when outward causes are complete but contentment is not. Not every experience of restlessness is a spiritual sign, but neither can the human being be reduced to the realm of utility.

The spirit is the self considered in its spiritual rank: in the fact that its reality cannot be reduced to matter, and in its openness to truth, absolute perfection, and the end of servanthood. To call this the higher rank does not place it spatially above the other aspects, nor give it an authority that cancels intellect or body. It identifies one aspect of the single human reality.

From this perspective, *fitra* is an immediate, general awareness of truth, an original love of perfection, and an orientation towards servanthood. It is not detailed acquired knowledge; its disclosure and the identification of its true object require revelation, intellect, and *tazkiya*. *Fitra* may be veiled. The veil obscures the expression of what *fitra* calls for or confuses our reading of its effects without uprooting its origin. Desire, habit, fear, upbringing, and misperception rename things until a person seeks good in a form that harms them, or flees truth because it threatens an image they have built of themselves. They become like someone looking into a dusty mirror and seeing only a shadow of themselves.

Tazkiya therefore does not come to create a new *fitra* within you, but to wipe the dust from the original mirror: it uncovers what *fitra* calls for and cultivates the perfections that accord with it. Revelation clarifies, the intellect discerns, the heart accepts, and remembrance keeps the presence alive. *Fitra* does not dispense with revelation and intellect, nor may it become a name for every inward inclination.

A reader may feel that a verse knows them before they know it. This is a real human experience, and we describe it modestly: the response of *fitra* to a meaning that accords with its origin — not a detailed memory on which we may build a judgement independent of the text and the intellect.

This spiritual rank of your reality cannot be reduced to bodily functions or mental calculation. The Qur'an points to it by the name "spirit" and brings language to its proper limit: 'They ask you about the spirit. Say: the spirit is of the command of my Lord; and you have been given of knowledge only a little' (Q 17:85). The verse gives us no anatomy of the spirit; it teaches humility before its reality.

Pause over the attribution in God's words, 'and breathed into him of my spirit' (Q 15:29): it does not mean that there is in the human being a portion of God's essence; the attribution expresses honour and possession in relation to a created spirit. But it opens before the human being an exalted meaning: their reality is not exhausted by matter, and they possess a receptivity for knowledge, servanthood, and nearness.

The Qur'an places this created origin in relation to religion and orientation: 'So set your face towards the religion, inclining to truth — the fitra of God upon which he created humankind' (Q 30:30). The verse indicates an original mode of creation connected with uprightness in religion, without making fitra a complete body of detailed knowledge or an irresistible drive.

Fitra is the mode of creation upon which the human reality and the human spirit were created. Şadr al-Muta'allihīn spoke of the 'fitra of the spirit' and the 'fitra of the luminous spirit'; and Imam al-Khomeinī explained fitra as a state and mode inherent in the original creation, not knowledge acquired from outside.^{[11][12]}

Fitra is a specific mode of human creation that includes an immediate, general awareness of truth, an original love of absolute perfection, and an orientation towards servanthood.

It is not detailed acquired knowledge or a complete religious consciousness; its disclosure and the identification of its true object therefore require revelation, the intellect, and tazkiya. Its effects appear in the whole human being: the intellect discerns, the heart accepts, the human being turns to God, and through the body embodies the truth to which they have responded. Tazkiya uncovers what fitra calls for and cultivates the perfections that accord with it.

From another perspective, the covenant discloses the origin of your relationship with your Lord: ‘and made them bear witness concerning themselves: “Am I not your Lord?” They said: “Yes; we bear witness”’ (Q 7:172, relevant passage). In this project’s reading, fitra and the covenant are understood as one monotheistic reality considered from two aspects: fitra in its rootedness in creation, and the covenant in the calling to bear witness, the acknowledgement, and the binding proof. This is what we call “the covenant of fitra”, drawing support from the words of the Commander of the Faithful (peace be upon him) on the sending of the prophets: ‘to call upon them to fulfil the covenant of their God-given fitra’. We do not make the two terms synonymous, nor does this connection settle the disputed interpretations of how that witnessing took place.^[13]

The practical requirement appears in God’s charge to the children of Adam: ‘Did I not charge you, children of Adam, not to worship Satan — surely he is a clear enemy to you — and to worship me? This is a straight path’ (Q 36:60–61). Within this synthesis, we read the charge as a call to fulfil what God’s lordship requires, and worship of God as the path of that fidelity. Return is not a return to a ready-made perfection that experience has buried within you. It is a return to what your fitra and servanthood require, realised through what you know, choose, and do. Your responsibility remains

proportionate to the clarification that has reached you and to your practical scope, not to an assumption that everyone possesses the same detailed knowledge.

Nor do your natural needs and powers contradict fitra. Your need for security and belonging, your fear, desire, and anger, are not evil in their origin. The deviation intended here is that a power or need should take sole command of your direction, exceed its proper place, or compete with the truth. You therefore need tazkiya that disciplines and orders these powers, not a war upon your body or the erasure of your feelings.

Fitra does not mean complete, detailed knowledge, and it does not make every inner feeling an infallible proof. Desire may mix with fitra; habit may assume the name of intuition; a person may justify their fear in the language of wisdom. That is why fitra needs the light of revelation, the discernment of the intellect, the purification of the heart, and the effects of action that disclose the truthfulness of the claim.

The Heart: The Self in Its Inner and Evaluative Perception, Intention, and Orientation

In some explanations, the Arabic name for the heart, qalb, is linked to its frequent turning (taqallub). It fluctuates because the self is exposed each day to images, news, relationships, and memories. Knowing your orientation once is therefore not enough; you need practices that renew it when details draw you towards smaller centres — praise, fear, money, or the image you present to other people.

The heart is the seat of intention because the same outward act does not carry the same value when its motive changes. Two people may give the same sum: one from mercy, the other in pursuit of display. The form is one, but what takes

shape within each self differs. Yet intention cannot make an unjust means sound; the truthful heart accepts the governance of truth.

In the heart, love and aversion form slowly. What you are exposed to once may pass; what you repeat and approve of acquires a place. That is why guarding the heart does not mean building a fortress against the whole world, but becoming aware of what you allow to grow familiar and what you refuse to let develop from a fleeting image into a settled inclination.

Purity of heart may be confused with ease of mood. A heart may be truthful while in pain, and deceived while comfortable in a habit. The measure of purity is not pleasure alone, but the self's capacity to receive the truth even when it goes against its desire, and to return when its error becomes clear.

In this book, the heart is neither the muscle that pumps blood, nor the sum of emotions, nor a second self independent of the first. It is the human self considered in its inward and evaluative perception: its acceptance and refusal, love and aversion, faith, intention, orientation, and tranquillity. This is close to al-‘Allāma al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s explanation that the heart to which the Qur’an attributes perception, feeling, and will is the human self itself, considered from this aspect.^[14]

This is why the Qur’an attributes understanding, hardness, sickness, and tranquillity to the heart. God says: ‘It is not the eyes that are blind, but the hearts within the breasts that are blind’ (Q22:46). Consider the location of blindness in the verse: the eye sees the image, but the heart receives the value of what it sees and turns towards it or away from it. The more serious loss is not loss of sight, but loss of the insight that sees meaning.

The heart does not make its bearer infallible simply because something was “felt”. It may truthfully disclose something deep within the person, or it may be disturbed by fear, attachment, a wound, or a habit. Truthfulness towards the heart does not mean obeying every desire that moves within it. It means acknowledging what is there, placing it before the truth, and educating the heart until it accords with what the intellect has recognised and revelation has made clear.

Your feelings are not enemies to be erased, nor commands to be executed. They are data about the state of the self: they disclose a fear, a longing, an attachment, or a need — and then they wait for your understanding and your decision. Grief may remain with faith, and fear with courage; but neither is bound to govern the orientation.

The Intellect: The Self in Its Understanding, Discernment, and Judgement

The intellect does not work in a vacuum. It enters every question carrying a language, experiences, and prior assumptions. It can therefore be an instrument of discovery, and it can turn into a skilful advocate for a desire that made its decision before the argument was even presented. Rational self-accounting begins with a question: am I searching for the truth, or for an argument for what I want?

Among the functions of the intellect is to distinguish fact from interpretation. The event occurred, but your interpretation may be only one among several possibilities. A word addressed to you may be an insult, a poor choice of expression, or sound criticism. A balanced intellect postpones judgement, seeks corroboration, and does not treat emotion as final proof.

The intellect's perfection appears when it knows its limits. It does not classify every unseen reality as impossible merely because it cannot measure it, nor accept every spiritual claim merely because it exceeds measurement. It asks about source, evidence, and context, and knows that revelation guides it to what it cannot grasp on its own without excusing it from thought.

In this way, the intellect serves the ends of servanthood rather than becoming a cold mechanism. It plans, learns, compares, and consults, but does not make competence a god or success the final measure. Its value lies in the orientation it serves and in the justice and benefit it leaves behind.

The intellect is the self when it understands meanings, relations, and consequences; discerns, reasons, judges, and reviews; and connects means to ends. It does not create the truth from itself; but neither is it a passive translator of the heart. Through it the human being reads revelation and reality, distinguishes evidence from conjecture, reviews their motives, plans their work, and learns from the outcome.

The intellect needs revelation so that it does not turn its own limits into the limits of truth, and it needs a purified heart so that intelligence does not become a stratagem in the service of desire. The heart, in turn, needs the intellect so that not every surge of feeling is called certainty and not every aversion insight. Their relation is not a command descending from one level to another, but a continuous interaction within one self.

The intellect forms maps of understanding: conceptions of God, the self, other people, success, and fear. These maps are one layer of the shakila, but not the whole of it. A person may understand a sound idea while an inclination, habit, or

orientation within the self contradicts it. We will return in the chapter on substantial motion to the wider form from which action proceeds.

The Bodily Dimension: Your Embodied Presence in the World

Sleep, nourishment, and movement affect the clarity of decision-making and cannot be ignored. A person may interpret quickness to anger as a problem of faith alone while the body is chronically exhausted. Caring for the body does not solve every crisis of the heart, but it can quiet a noise that prevents you from hearing what is happening within.

The body carries the traces of experience in its own way: the heartbeat quickens at a danger resembling an earlier danger; the muscles tighten before the intellect has formed an interpretation. This does not mean the human being is a prisoner of their nervous system; it means that wise tazkiya takes account of what the body has learned, and retrains it with patience, safety, and treatment.

Through the bodily dimension, inward meaning enters the world. Mercy that never becomes a helping hand remains incomplete in expression; justice that changes no decision remains an idea; an apology the tongue never speaks does not reach the person who was wronged. The bodily dimension is the site of embodiment, and through repeated action it also educates the inward life.

That is why righteous action is part of the building of the self, not merely its result. A person may begin with the act before the corresponding feeling is fully formed: they rise to pray while feeling unenthusiastic, or maintain a family tie

while hesitant. If they are truthful in the act and repeat it, the effect returns from the body to the heart and the intellect, and change becomes circular rather than a single straight line.

The body is not a temporary shell with no bearing on the human being's reality, nor an external machine carrying a separate self. It is the bodily rank of the human being: the field of embodied presence, sensory reception, and action in this life. The self is affected by the body's states and also affects them.

That is why the body is a trust: a part of your worldly existence and the field of your action, entrusted to you by God. You are therefore required to preserve it, care for it, cultivate its ability, and use it in service of truth, without deifying it, neglecting its needs, or deliberately harming it. Its rights include nourishment, sleep, rest, movement, treatment, recreation, and lawful enjoyment in their proper places. Not because its comfort is the end of life, but because the body is part of the person's unity, part of the trust placed in them, and the field of their action. Neglect it, and it weakens your worship and work; worship it, and you make comfort and pleasure the centre of what was created to be a path.

Recent studies of interoception and embodiment confirm that signals arriving from the heart, the breath, the viscera, and the nervous system enter into the formation of emotion, bodily awareness, and decision-making. This neither proves the metaphysical spirit nor disproves it; but it reminds us that human experience does not take place in a mind isolated from the body.^[15]

In prayer, the body stands, the intellect reads, the heart is present, and the spirit turns towards God — not because four persons perform one act, but because the one human being

enters worship through every aspect of their existence. The same unity appears in anger: breathing changes, attention narrows, the heart inclines, the intellect selects an interpretation, and the whole appears in bodily action.

Harmony: Unity, Not Uniformity

Reform may begin from the top of the map, with a meaning that guides you; and it may begin from its bottom, with a small bodily habit. Regulate your sleep, and your intellect has more room for reflection and review; keep company with a truthful person, and your heart grows ashamed of some of its masks; understand a verse in a new way, and your decisions change. The unity of the self makes every door capable of affecting the rest.

That is why we do not hunt for ‘the guilty dimension’ whenever a person is out of balance. The body may be tired, the heart afraid, the intellect captive to a single interpretation, and the spirit veiled by prolonged noise. Integrated treatment asks about the whole, then begins from the place where the person has actual capacity.

Harmony does not mean the end of inner debate. The intellect may know a duty, and the heart may feel its weight — and then the self chooses to perform it. This tension is not a blameworthy division; it is the field of the will. Division begins when the self adopts two contradictory orientations and insists on calling both of them true.

When we say that the dimensions harmonise, we do not mean their differences disappear, but that their functions turn towards one end. The intellect understands and discerns the truth; the heart accepts it; the spirit turns to God and the end of servanthood; and the human being embodies it

through the body in word and deed. Correction may begin from any aspect: a meaning the intellect grasps, a prostration that softens the heart, companionship that wakes the fitra, or regular sleep that restores the self's power of discernment.

The more the aspects of the self come into truthful accord under truth and fitra, the more integrated and inwardly gathered the self becomes, and the fewer the causes of dispersion, inner conflict, and competing veils. Its tranquillity, firmness, and stability increase, and its capacity to savour the goodness of its own existence and of the world around it widens. This is one aspect of its happiness, not a promise that every grief, fear, or pain will disappear.

Disorder appears when the aspects drift apart: the intellect knows what the heart does not want; the tongue declares what the self does not intend; the body is spent on what undermines the spirit's orientation. The problem is not the existence of a passing tension — the striving itself is a sign of life. The problem is when contradiction becomes an accepted state, then a habit, then a settled form.

The sound heart is the image of this gathering around the truth: 'the day when neither wealth nor children will avail, except for one who comes to God with a sound heart' (Q 26:88–89). What is meant is not a heart without human feelings, but a self that does not make desire a lord, and does not know the truth and then take its opposite as a settled orientation.

In Şadrian language, this gathering of perfections within the self may be described as an increase in existential simplicity. That is a secondary philosophical description; the integration of the self and the harmony of its aspects remain the more immediate language of this book.^[16]

The Measure of Striving and the Limits of the Given

The unity of the human being does not mean the sameness of human beings. Bodies differ in health and strength; mental capacities differ; experiences, environments, wounds, and opportunities for learning vary. Some of this is a first given the person did not choose; some is open to growth; and some is the result of choices repeated until they settled.

For this reason, one person's journey is not to be read by the measure of another's. A person is not blamed for a beginning they did not choose; responsibility attaches instead to what they knew, accepted, and continued to nourish within their practical scope. Responsibility widens according to what has reached them and what they have understood, their actual capacity, and the tools, time, environment, and opportunities available to them — not according to a single form imposed on everyone.

God says: 'and that the human being shall have only what he has striven for, and that his striving will be seen' (Q 53:39–40). Pause over what the verse establishes and what it does not: the meaning is not that every worldly outcome lies in your hands, but that striving is the sphere of your responsibility and that God sees the effort you have made within your givens and limits.

Here the role of the will comes forward: not as a power that creates you from nothing, but as the place of your responsible participation in shaping the self. You begin from givens you did not choose, yet you do not remain their mechanical sum. Through what you know, choose, and repeat, you cultivate a receptivity or weaken it, nourish a configuration or interrupt its path.

In Closing

You are one self, read through four interwoven aspects: a bodily dimension — embodied presence and action; a heart — inward and evaluative perception, intention, and orientation; an intellect — understanding, discernment, and judgement; and a spirit — the self considered in its spiritual reality and openness to God and perfection. Fitra contains an immediate, general awareness of truth, an original love of perfection, and an orientation towards servanthood. It is not complete, detailed knowledge; its effects appear throughout the self when illumined by revelation, intellect, and tazkiya.

You do not reform the self by declaring war among these aspects, but by returning each function to its proper place and connecting it with its orientation. You care for the bodily dimension without worshipping it, listen to the heart without deifying it, use the intellect without treating it as self-sufficient, and respond to the spirit without turning every passing thought into an unveiling.

One question opens the next chapter: this single self does not undergo becoming in a vacuum. It lives in a world of causes, receptivities, and opposites. What does it mean for the world to be ordered, and for you to act within it without independence?



A Pause for Reflection

Before you close this chapter, look at your four aspects as they are in you today, not as you wish them to be. Which of them has tyrannised over the rest and begun to dictate to you? An intellect that analyses everything until it has extinguished your heart? A heart led by emotions without insight? Bodily needs that have swollen until they veil the other aspects? Or a spirit so covered in dust that the voice of fitra in it has grown almost inaudible? And which aspect is waiting for you to return it to its place, before you close this page?



Chapter Four —

The Regularities of Existence

Section One: Prelude

Each day you rely upon regularities you do not need to name: you press a switch and expect light; take medicine in hope of its effect; apologise because words leave traces in relationships; and learn because repetition increases preparedness and expands actual capacity. The regularity of causes makes action possible and gives responsibility its meaning.

This regularity does not make the world a closed machine, nor the cause independent of God. Fire burns under certain conditions, medicine benefits under certain conditions, and a decision leaves an effect within a network of people and circumstances. The cause is real at its own level, but it is limited and dependent upon the One who created it and sustains its effect.

Knowing the regularities does not give you control over every detail. Some regularities are cosmic and general; some concern human and social action; and some are mentioned by the Qur'an in the destinies of nations. We distinguish among them, act upon the causes that appear, and entrust what remains hidden to God. The regularities increase responsibility; they do not abolish mystery.

We closed the previous chapter by considering the human being as one self with interwoven aspects. But the human being does not undergo becoming within the self alone. Every person lives in a world of bodies, persons, events, and causes — some open a way, some resist, and some become intelligible only with time.

The question about the regularities is therefore practical before it is philosophical: how do you act once you know that deeds have effects, that outcomes have causes, that your ability is real but limited, and that what you do not understand does not become futile merely because it is hidden from you?

The Qur'an establishes that existence is created by measure: 'Surely we have created everything by measure' (Q 54:49). Notice the qualification. The verse does not merely say "we created it", but "we created it by measure"; creation itself is apportioned. It also establishes the constancy of general regularities in the lives of nations and individuals: 'and you will never find in God's sunna any change' (Q 35:43). This gives us no magic key for explaining every individual event, nor does it mean that every detail can be traced to a particular wisdom known to us.

A divine sunna is a constant or predominant pattern God has established in his creation; we grasp some of it through revelation, and some through observation and experience. Part of respecting the regularities is to search for the cause, learn from the outcome, and not replace planning with wishing. Part of humility before them is to know that our knowledge is partial, and that the causes we see are not all there is in existence.

This chapter does not present the whole system of the Transcendent Philosophy, nor does it make its concepts the only interpretation of the Qur'an. It draws from that tradition, and from Islamic philosophy more broadly, what helps us understand the human being and human responsibility: the reality of causes, the variation of receptivities, the world's dependence upon God, and the way settled qualities become a form within the self.

Section Two: Causation — Real but Non-Independent Causes

Part of respecting causality is accepting responsibility for the effect. A hurtful word does not cease to have consequences because you 'did not mean it'; and a good intention does not, by itself, restore a right that was lost. You look at the chain of the act — purpose, means, result — then repair what you can of it.

Part of respecting it, too, is not burdening yourself with responsibility for everything that happens. Not every outcome is the fruit of your decision alone; the decisions of others, natural circumstances, and social structures interweave. A just account of responsibility distinguishes between

an effect you helped bring about and one that befell you, and between what could have been foreseen and what lay beyond practical scope.

Making use of means is not confined to direct material instruments. Knowledge is a cause; consultation is a cause; supplication is a cause established by the revealed law; building trust is a social cause; rest is a cause of good performance. The mistake is to choose one cause and then ask it to carry an entire system.

A person may use trust in God as a screen for abandoning the cause, or use the cause as a screen for self-sufficiency. The first waits for a harvest without having sown; the second imagines that sowing gives them control over the rain, the timing, and the crop's safety. The road joins excellence of work with dependence on God.

When you do not understand the cause, do not hurry to fill the gap with superstition or accusation. Say: I do not know. Then gather information, consult people with experience, and review your decision. Admitting ignorance is part of reason, not a defeat of it.

The human being acts every day on the basis that deeds have results: they learn because knowledge is a cause, seek treatment because medicine is a cause, apologise because an apology may repair the consequences of an action, and repeat an experiment because they have found a fault. This awareness is not a deification of causes; it is an acknowledgement of the order God created.

A cause is real at its own level, but not independent. Fire burns through the property God has placed within it and when the conditions of its effect are present. Medicine may benefit, but it does not possess the power to benefit

independently and cannot guarantee benefit in every case. Al-‘Allāma al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī explained that affirming the causality of things does not remove them from God’s dominion: both their existence and their effects subsist through him.^[17]

It is therefore wrong to say that God “acts only through causes”, as though he were bound by them, and equally wrong to neglect causes in the name of trust in God. In the ordinary course, God has ordered the world through causes and granted them their effects, while remaining neither in need of them nor confined by them. Making use of means is a practical expression of servanthood: you work in the world as God created it, not as you wish it were.

What we call chance may be a meeting of causes whose conjunction we did not intend or did not know — not an event without order. Yet it does not follow that every detail is open to human calculation, or that the world turns into a deterministic machine with no place for choice. Your will itself is one of the real causes within a wider network; it works within God’s governance and is not independent of it.

When an outcome falls short, examine the factors you can reassess: incomplete knowledge, a hasty decision, an overlooked circumstance, or a cause beyond your power. Do not turn every failure into an accusation against yourself or every success into proof that you deserved it. The result alone does not reveal the measure of truthfulness or *tawfiq*.

Supplication does not ask God to cancel the regularities; it turns towards the Lord of the regularities, asking him to prepare a cause, avert an obstacle, inspire a decision, or open the way to a good beyond your ability. The answer may come in an unexpected form, and the particular wisdom may remain hidden from you.

Section Three: Your Given and Your Receptivities

The first given explains the differences between paths. One who grew up in safety does not start from the same place as one who lived with chronic fear; one who had access to education is not like one deprived of it. Do not make the visible outcome alone the measure of the effort each has expended.

Four terms must be distinguished. Receptivity is the range of structural possibility available for growth or becoming. Preparedness is the degree to which that receptivity is poised for realisation. Actual capacity is what a person can do or refrain from doing now. Practical scope (wus') is what responsibility rests upon in the person's actual circumstances, taking account of knowledge, intention, actual capacity, obstacles, and the available means the person can put in place through learning, treatment, or seeking help. Practical scope is neither an imagined ideal performance nor a distant receptivity that has not yet become part of actual capacity.

Some receptivities are prepared by training: the powers of attention and expression grow stronger, and patience settles through repeated action. Some limits may remain, and need management and mercy. Maturity is not a promise that every self will become capable of everything; it means drawing the best out of your given and knowing when to ask for help.

Passing states do not deserve to become final definitions. You say 'I feel fear' instead of 'I am a coward', and 'I made a mistake' instead of 'I am the mistake'. This distinction does not lighten responsibility; it prevents the state from stealing the name of the self and closing the door to change.

A settled disposition (*malaka*), by contrast, is known by stability and relative ease. One who gives charity once is not necessarily generous, and one who is angered once is not necessarily wrathful. But every act adds a weight, until a tendency takes shape and becomes your usual point of return. Here repetition matters more than the passing impression.

The acquired existential form does not erase the person's uniqueness. The person is the self that continues; the existential form is the overall mode of being the person has acquired and carries with them. Patience in a mother, a leader, or someone who is ill is the same quality in meaning, but embodied in different histories, relationships, and abilities. Moral unity does not produce identical copies of human beings.

Life begins with givens you did not choose: a body, a temperament, a family, a language, an environment, initial receptivities, historical and social circumstances. These givens are not a moral verdict upon you, nor evidence of nearness or distance; but they form the starting point and the field of responsibility.

It is a mistake to imagine a complete and neutral self to which qualities are later attached from outside. The opposite mistake is to say that the human being is nothing more than whatever they happen to find within themselves and therefore cannot change. The self is individuated by its existence and possesses powers and receptivities; what settles within it of knowledge, will, love, and disposition becomes part of its acquired form.

You are one self, not a bundle of scattered qualities. Yet the self is not a rigid mould wearing attributes like a garment. It is transformed by what it knows, chooses, loves, and does. Şadr

al-Muta'allihīn held that a disposition may become so settled that it becomes "a substantial form of the self", rather than remaining an external accident that passes over it and disappears.^[18]

Here four layers should be distinguished: initial givens you did not choose; powers and receptivities that can grow; passing states, like momentary fear or anger; and settled dispositions, like truthfulness, miserliness, or patience. A thought that passes through your mind does not define you, but what you accept, continue to nourish, and repeat may turn into a configuration from which your acts issue.

The more accurate statement, then, is that your settled qualities become your acquired existential form. This does not mean that your features, illness, or every emotion within you are identical with your moral self, nor that changing one quality creates another person. The self continues — which is why it can repent, learn, and be held accountable — but it does not remain in exactly the same form after dispositions have become settled within it.

Knowledge, understanding, will, and power, when they become actual qualities in the self, are partial existential perfections; but the orientation of response gives them their moral value and determines whether they draw a person nearer to God or farther from him. A person may increase in knowledge and use it to become more skilful in committing injustice, grow in strength and become oppressive, or strengthen their will and remain firm in falsehood. These perfections become complete virtues only when ordered around truth and servanthood and translated into mercy, justice, and trustworthiness.

Knowledge, understanding, will, settled dispositions, and powers that have become actual qualities of the self count as actualised perfection (al-taḥaqquq al-kamālī). A receptivity, resource, or circumstance that merely widens the field of action remains instrumental expansion. The reality of an actualised perfection is not the same as the degree of personal merit in acquiring it; merit is assessed according to what a person did with what they were given.

You begin from a given, then contribute through your choices and actions — within what God has enabled you to do, and with his guidance and aid preceding your effort — to cultivating your receptivities and shaping the self. You neither begin from nothing nor act independently. You do not create the origin of ability or bring its fruit forth by yourself, but you are a real agent at your own level. This is the place of responsibility between determinism and the illusion of independence.

Section Four: Divine Giving and Differing Receptivities

When you see differences in what people are given, beware of two hasty judgements: counting abundance as evidence of special love, or counting straitness as evidence of contempt. The Qur'an mentions trial by evil and by good together: 'and we test you with evil and with good, as a trial' (Q 21:35). Both what you are given and what you are denied place a question before you; the answer is not revealed by size alone.

Nor does belief in wisdom justify abandoning social justice. Where opportunities differ, it is the responsibility of the able to open a door, and the function of society to lift an injustice that can be lifted. To say that every person has a measure does not make poverty or deprivation an order to be sanctified.

Receptivity is not a prior claim upon God, as though the creature were demanding a share he owed it. It is itself a gift and a rank in creation. So gratitude begins with the gift of existence itself; the question is about how what was given is used — not a quarrel with other people's stories.

And when you do not understand the wisdom of a particular difference, do not fill the gap with an easy answer. It may be enough to know that your knowledge is limited, that divine justice excludes wrongdoing, and that your duty is to act on what you know of truth and mercy — not to claim the complete map.

We may then ask: if God is one and the source of existence is one, why do shares, receptivities, and circumstances differ? This book offers no answer that reduces God's wisdom to a single cause, and it does not say that worldly giving is distributed equally and that people differ only in receiving it.

The source is one, but divine giving is diverse and governed by wisdom. Givens differ, receptivities differ, and responses differ. Some differences are trials; some allow people to complement one another; and some carry a wisdom we cannot encompass. Divine justice does not mean identical stories; it means that no one is wronged and that reckoning follows what reached a person, what they understood, and what lay within their practical scope.

The philosophers use the word “emanation” (fayḍ) to express the continual dependence of all existents upon God for both existence and subsistence. It does not mean the issuing of something from the divine essence, nor a world flowing mechanically and independently of will and wisdom. The term is used here within this limit, without building an entire philosophical system upon it.

God is exalted above place. He is not described as inside or outside the universe in the spatial sense used of bodies. The whole universe subsists through him and depends upon him; he encompasses it in knowledge and power and sustains it at every moment, without indwelling or union.

Likewise, the simplicity of the divine act does not mean that God fails to know creatures in detail or to will them. God does not act under the pressure of time as we do; everything that exists is known to him and occurs by his will and wisdom — not as the blind outcome of a system independent of him.

The verse offers the image of water flowing through valleys: ‘and valleys flowed, each according to its measure’ (Q 13:17). The water is one, the sky is one, the valleys differ, and each carries water according to its measure. The image helps us understand differing receptivities in receiving truth; it does not establish that every person receives an equal worldly share and that all difference arises from the recipient alone.

The image of the valleys is useful because it joins the unity of the rain with the difference of the channels: the narrow valley carries according to its measure, and the wide valley according to its measure. In its acquired aspect, the valley is not a sealed channel: through learning, companionship, and tazkiya, you can widen some of its banks, while other limits remain givens to be managed with wisdom and mercy. But

this is an image of receptivity in receiving truth — not a verdict that worldly shares are equal, nor a pretext for burdening the deprived with responsibility for a deprivation they did not choose.

In practice, this understanding calls you to two inseparable duties: to give thanks for what you were given and work to cultivate it, and to stop turning human difference into a judgement of worth. Do not boast of a beginning you did not create, despise yourself for what you did not choose, or cease striving to change what you can.

From here we reach the opposites. Ability does not appear in a vacuum, a quality does not become settled without a situation, and a receptivity is not realised in action without a world that resists and summons it.

Section Five: Opposites — The Field of Movement, Not the Glorification of Pain

Our experience of this worldly origination rests upon differences and tensions: night and day, motion and rest, heat and cold, strength and weakness, life and death. In the world as we know it, some of these differences, together with change, limits, and resistance, allow movement, choice, and the actualisation of receptivities. The point is to describe the structure of worldly life, not to claim that every mode of existence without opposition must be motionless or that every pain is necessary for growth. Nor are the two sides of every opposition equal in value, and injustice does not need justice in order to be complete. Natural differences may make movement possible; moral evil must be resisted.

Opposites as Structure, Not a Justification of Evil

In the material world, many forms of movement arise from differences: a difference in pressure moves air; a difference in electrical potential moves charge; a muscle grows strong under measured resistance and then needs rest. These examples remind us that differences make movement possible; they do not prove that every human pain is required or beneficial.

In the life of the self, courage cannot appear without a fear that can be faced, patience without hardship, or justice without the possibility of deviating from it. Moral value arises because the human being has alternatives and weighs them, not because evil becomes good in itself.

As for illness, poverty, and injustice, these are not ‘poles’ that must be kept so that the world stays balanced. Resisting them may open a field for great qualities; but the duty is treatment, relief, and justice. Drawing good out of confronting harm does not turn the harm into a benefit intended for its own sake.

Resistance Brings Receptivity into Actuality

A person may carry a receptivity for acquiring patience, but it does not become a settled disposition merely by existing in potential. They need a situation in which they choose disciplined waiting over collapse or aggression. The same is true of mercy, truthfulness, and courage: each becomes settled when the corresponding act is repeated in real situations.

This does not mean that all resistance strengthens. Excessive resistance can harm the body and the self, leaving a person in need of protection and treatment. Just as physical

training requires measured strain and rest, striving requires wisdom, gentleness, and a supportive environment. That the human being is charged only within practical scope is part of the order of becoming, not an exception to it.

From here we understand that friction grants a possibility of becoming. The outcome depends on the response, on aid and environment, on the person's actual capacity, and on what their practical scope allows. One person may draw mercy out of an ordeal; another may emerge wounded and in need of someone to carry them — and both remain within the circle of servanthood and mercy.

The Opposites within You

The self experiences inner tensions: an immediate desire and a meaning beyond the immediate, a fear and a duty, a love of ease and a longing for perfection. We do not say there are two selves in the human being, but that the one self receives multiple drives and then chooses what it adopts and continues to nourish.

God says: ‘By the self and the One who proportioned it, then inspired it with its depravity and its God-consciousness’ (Q 91:7–8). The inspiration does not mean that God planted evil as a virtue parallel to good; it means he taught the self the two paths and made it capable of discernment and responsibility. God-consciousness is choosing the truth while able to do otherwise.

Nor is tension always a sign of sickness or hypocrisy. The intellect may know a duty that weighs on the heart, and then the will performs the act. This is the field of striving. The fault

begins when the two opposing orientations turn into a permanent system of justification, so that desire is called right and the truth is called right at the same time.

Repelling Harm Is Not the Glorification of Conflict

God says: ‘Were it not that God repels some people by means of others, the earth would be corrupted’ (Q 2:251). The verse comes in the context of repelling corruption by a counterforce, and it teaches us that leaving injustice unresisted allows its corruption to spread. It does not make every conflict a praiseworthy cosmic law; it places power in the service of truth and balance.

From here, reform is a movement within the world: a law that limits injustice, a treatment that resists illness, an upbringing that weakens a habit, a process of accountability that checks deviation. We do not wait for the opposite to reform us by itself; we repel it by the causes God has legislated, and we guard ourselves from coming to resemble what we resist.

From Darkness to Light

God says: ‘God is the guardian of those who believe; he brings them out of the darkneses into the light’ (Q 2:257). This emergence from darkness is not a promise that every darkness will turn automatically into light; it is guidance and work: from ignorance to knowledge, from servitude to desire to servanthood to God, from injustice to justice.

Illness may remain illness and loss remain loss, but the human being need not grant either the authority to define them completely. They seek treatment, ask for help, accept

grief, and choose the truth that remains within their ability. If meaning or strength emerges, it is the fruit of guidance and response, not a mechanical property of pain.

The Regularity of Friction: When Receptivity Meets Action

Opposites do not change you merely by existing around you. Change begins when they touch you and call for a decision: to accept or refuse, endure or transgress, seek help or deny the need. In this encounter, receptivity is realised in action, and action leaves a trace within the self.

Fitra is a given origin; a settled quality is acquired. Every piece of knowledge you accept, every action you repeat, and every repentance through which you repair deviation enters the form of the self. In this way, you participate in shaping the self without creating its origin or bringing forth its fruit independently.

Once friction is understood with this precision, the question of evil itself remains: how can harm be real without being an independent principle contending with the good? The next section takes up this question.

Section Six: Evil — Not an Independent Principle

A person in pain may ask: what good does it do me to know that evil is not an independent principle? It helps by preventing evil from being granted a station greater than its own. Harm is real, but it is not the lord of existence or an

absolute power that writes destiny. It can be resisted, some of its effects can be repaired, and a space may remain within the self that it does not own.

The difference between explanation and justification is decisive. We may explain how certain circumstances produced a crime; the explanation does not justify it. We may understand the effect of a wound on someone's behaviour; the understanding does not cancel the right of the one they harmed. Mercy towards the person and justice towards the act can coexist.

We do not use the claim 'evil is privative' to silence the protest of the wronged, but to deny that evil possesses an independent perfection. Then we return to the ground: a right that must be restored, a pain that needs treatment, an aggressor who must be stopped, and a self that needs to avoid becoming like what it has resisted.

One question cannot be evaded: if existence is created with wisdom, why illness, injustice, loss, and disasters? The philosophical answer, if spoken without care, may wound instead of clarifying. So we begin by distinguishing the reality of evil in existence from the experience of pain in the human being.

In the monotheistic vision there is no independent evil principle set against God or contending with him. The philosophers explain that much evil goes back to the privation of a perfection befitting the thing: blindness is the privation of sight; illness the privation of health; injustice the seizure of a right and the corruption of an order. But this does not make the effect of the privation an illusion.

Ṣadr al-Muta'allihīn discussed how pain itself is a real, felt existential experience, even where the aspect of evil in it is connected to the loss of health or the occurrence of harm.^[19]

So we do not tell the sick person that their illness is ‘a privation’ and no more, nor the wronged that their pain is merely a failure of perspective.

Evil as Privation, Harm, and Corruption with Real Effect

Fire exists and is beneficial in many respects, but it harms when it burns a body. Illness is a real process, and its evil appears in the health and ability it destroys. Injustice is an existing act whose evil lies in seizing a right and corrupting the self and society. A thing may be good from one perspective and relatively evil in its effect, without evil becoming an independent substance.

Some evil issues from human choice: aggression, betrayal, neglect, exploitation. The Qur’an attributes corruption to what people earn: ‘Corruption has appeared on land and sea because of what people’s hands have earned’ (Q 30:41). This does not mean that every individual affliction is a punishment for its bearer’s sin, nor that the wronged person is responsible for an injustice that fell upon them.

Some pain is connected to the structure of the material world: illness, old age, loss, disasters. Some of its causes may be disclosed to us, while its particular wisdom remains hidden. We have no right to assert that every closed door protects us, that every illness carries a specific message, or that every loss is a path chosen for the sufferer’s growth.

The Limits of Explanation

God may bring out of hardship a good the person causing harm did not intend, and an ordeal may become, through a person’s response, an occasion for patience, mercy, or

courage. But possibility is not a guarantee. A person may emerge wounded, needing time, treatment, and companionship; stumbling is not evidence of weak faith.

God says: ‘Does he who created not know — he who is the Subtle, the All-Aware?’ (Q 67:14). The verse gives us confidence in God’s knowledge and kindness — not knowledge of what every event means. We maintain a good opinion of God without claiming knowledge we do not possess; we seek wisdom without attributing to God a meaning no evidence has established.

Monotheism does not ask you to surrender to evil. Repelling injustice, treating illness, relieving the stricken, and repairing causes are all works within God’s regularities. Evil is not a necessary half by which justice is completed; injustice is a corruption to be resisted, even though divine governance can bring good out of resisting it.

A Vision Freed from the Duality of Despair and Oversimplification

You are freed when you neither make evil another god nor make pain an illusion. You acknowledge the harm, mourn the loss, seek treatment, resist the injustice — and at the same time you do not concede that evil holds the last word, or that the past has become your destiny.

This vision does not explain everything, but it clarifies your position: you are responsible for whatever resistance, repair, and response lie within your power, while God knows the picture you cannot see. From here we move from evil in existence to the human being when evil and pain touch them: what does friction disclose, and what may take shape through resistance?

Chapter Conclusion: From Understanding the Cosmos to Walking within It

We reach the end of the chapter with five governing points in view: causes have real effects, but are not independent; people's givens and receptivities vary; divine giving is diverse, and cannot be reduced to a single equation; opposites open the field of movement without justifying evil; and harm is real, yet has no independent principle of its own and does not have the last word.

This knowledge gives you no secret explanation for everything that happens. It gives you a place from which to act: you search for the cause, make the effort you can, resist injustice, treat pain, and know that your ability is limited and that your dependence does not cancel your responsibility.

From here the book moves from the order of existence to the human being when that order touches them: how do they receive hardship and blessing? What do environment and whispering disclose? How can resistance call forth strength without our glorifying pain? These are the questions of the next chapter: the regularities of friction.



A Pause for Reflection

Before you close this chapter, call to mind something that resists you now: an illness, a habit, an injustice, or a limit in your ability. Do not assume it is an intended ‘gift’ whose secret you know. Ask: what is its apparent cause? What must be repelled, and what accepted? And what response preserves your right and your orientation, without denying the pain and without surrendering to it?



Chapter Five —

The Regularities of Friction

Section One: ‘In Hardship’ — The Meaning of Toil and Its Limits

We closed the previous chapter at a point where abstract knowledge is no longer enough. When pain descends, a person does not live the definitions of causation and evil; they live through a trembling body, a questioning heart, and an intellect searching for a cause. So this chapter begins from the reality of toil, not from its glorification.

God says: ‘We have created the human being in hardship’ (Q 90:4). The Arabic root of *kabad* centres on severity and toil and can also denote the middle or core of a thing. In the exegesis of the verse, it conveys the human being’s struggle with the affairs of life. These lexical shades bring into view a person living amid need, work, and limits without forcing

every possible sense of the root into the verse at once. The verse describes a human being created needy, changing, and limited — not a being placed in a world without fatigue.^[20]

The Reality of Toil, Not the Worship of Pain

The Qur'an's statement that the human being is "in hardship" does not mean that every moment must be painful, that rest is a deficiency, or that a person is commanded to remain in harm. Sleep, calm, and health are blessings, and the removal of hardship is a recognised aim of the revealed law. Human life, however, is never wholly free of need, work, loss, and limits.

The Qur'an says: 'We have created the human being in hardship'. The expression pictures the human being within a world where need, work, limits, and resistance interweave. It describes the structure of human experience; it is not a command to seek pain or remain in it.

You become hungry and seek food; you do not know, so you learn; you weaken and ask for help; you lose and grieve. This structure makes the human being dependent upon God, other people, and causes, and guards against the illusion of self-sufficiency. It does not make the amount of pain a measure of dignity or nearness.

Some hardships are natural to learning, work, and relationships; some are the result of a wrong choice; some are an injustice that must be removed; some are an illness that needs treatment. To gather them all under one interpretation does injustice to the experience and undermines responsibility.

So we do not say that everything which pains you was designed to shape you in a particular way whose secret we know. We say that nothing occurs outside God's knowledge

and dominion, and that divine governance can bring good out of resisting harm. Yet we do not always possess the ability to specify the particular wisdom, and we do not ask the sufferer to pretend to understand it.

Chosen Hardship and Hardship That Befalls Us

There is a difference between hardship chosen for a sound purpose and hardship that befalls you without choice. You may tire while seeking knowledge, caring for someone who is ill, or fulfilling a trust; here purpose gives effort its orientation. Injustice, illness, and loss do not become good merely because they occur, though your response to them may become a field of becoming.

God says: ‘So when you are free, strive on, and direct your longing to your Lord’ (Q 94:7–8). The context calls for the continuation of worship, work, and turning to God after one task is done — not for seeking exhaustion for its own sake. Praiseworthy exertion is effort in a right cause, governed by orientation and practical scope, alongside the right to rest and treatment.

When you choose to make a righteous effort, you do not thereby own the outcome. You sow, train, and endure; the fruit remains subject to causes beyond you. And when a hardship falls upon you, you begin with the practical question: what can be repelled? What needs temporary acceptance? And who can help me?

Toil Is Shared; the Stories Are Not Identical

The verse addresses the human being, and no one lives a life free of all hardship. Yet people’s pain is not equal, nor does every appearance of ease conceal equivalent suffering. A just

comparison recognises differences in burdens and resources and does not use the universality of toil to silence someone who has carried an added injustice.

The prophets were tried, but the amount of pain alone is not proof of rank. Nearness appears in truthfulness and servanthood, while blessing itself may be a more demanding trial of gratitude and justice. The question is not “Who suffered more?” but “How did each person fulfil what lay within their practical scope in that particular story?”

From the Question of Escape to the Question of Response

Faith does not ask you to stop seeking relief. The prophets prayed for the removal of harm, and the revealed law commands the lifting of injustice and the seeking of cure. What changes is the illusion of a life without limits: rather than treating every hardship as a disgrace or punishment, you face it as a reality that calls for understanding, attention to causes, supplication, and response.

The meaning of “in hardship” therefore opens the chapter without closing it upon a single answer. The human being lives in a world of toil, but the occurrence of a trial alone does not reveal whether it is punishment, elevation, or the effect of a cause; its wisdom may remain hidden. We therefore move to the next rule: do not infer the meaning of a trial merely from its occurrence.

Section Two: Trial — Do Not Judge Its Meaning from Its Occurrence

It may be part of mercy to refrain from interpreting another person's trial. When you stand beside a sick or bereaved person, they do not always need a lesson in wisdom; they may need presence, silence, and service. The easy phrase 'this is good for you' may add to their pain a feeling that they are required to deny what they are experiencing.

With yourself, by contrast, you may ask about meaning after you have done what the available causes require. Do not replace medical examination with interpretation, or restoration of a right with praise of patience. Begin with what you know, then open your heart to what you might learn — without forcing a quick answer.

Trial through blessing matters no less. Abundance discloses the place of wealth; success discloses conceit; influence discloses justice. Many people are good at crying for help in hardship, and find gratitude difficult when the wind blows in their favour.

When a trial descends, a person hastens to interpret it: is it punishment, elevation, or the effect of a mistake? The occurrence of affliction alone gives no ready answer. It may result from a cause the person chose, an injustice that befell them, an ordeal that discloses what lies within, or an occasion for raising their degree; the particular wisdom may remain hidden.

So it is not right to say that every trial is a punishment, just as it is not right to say that every trial is a specially designed lesson whose message we know. The prophets and the friends

of God were tried; the wrongdoer may be given respite; abundance is not a certificate of approval, just as hardship is not a certificate of anger.

Trial discloses because a situation brings what lies within the self into action: fear, patience, reliance, and attachment. God does not need the test in order to know. Disclosure occurs in the world of action so that the human being may know themselves, the binding proof may be established, and receptivity may become visible choice.

Disclosure does not mean that a person will necessarily emerge stronger. They may learn, collapse, or need someone to carry them. The value of trial is not mechanically contained in pain; it lies in the field opened for response, the tawfiq God grants, and what the person chooses within their actual capacity.

Obligation according to Practical Scope, Not a Guarantee of an Easy Event

God says: ‘God does not charge a self beyond its capacity’ (Q 2:286). Pause carefully over its scope. The verse concerns obligation and accountability: God does not demand of the servant what lies beyond their ability, and holds them to account for what their practical scope allowed. It is not a promise that every event will remain below the psychological threshold that can be borne without collapse, treatment, or help.

An affliction may weigh heavily on a person; their concentration may weaken; they may need a physician, a therapist, or family support. This does not mean they lack patience, nor

does it call their faith into question. Seeking help may itself be the act that remained within their practical scope — and by it they discharge their responsibility at that stage.

Ease with Hardship

God says: ‘Surely with hardship comes ease; surely with hardship comes ease’ (Q 94:5–6). The verse does not promise that hardship will disappear at once, but prevents us from seeing it as a sealed mass without openings. Ease may appear as a capacity to endure, a person who helps, a meaning that becomes clear, a treatment that works gradually, or another door that opens.

Nor may ease be turned into a categorical interpretation: “God withheld this because he intended that.” We may hope for kindness and discover some wisdom, but we do not possess knowledge of the unseen. What we do have is the duty of the moment: a cause to pursue, harm to repel, a supplication to offer, and an orientation to preserve.

Repentance Does Not Make Sin Desirable

A person may err under pressure, and a weakness not previously seen may be disclosed. Sin is a deviation from the orientation, not a required part of the journey’s design. But error need not become the ending: repentance prevents it from becoming settled and opens a path of repair.

God says: ‘except those who repent, believe, and do righteous work: for them, God will replace their evil deeds with good ones’ (Q 25:70). The sin does not become good in itself; rather, God replaces the effect of the evil deeds after repentance, faith, and righteous work.

Thus the question turns from ‘what is the particular message in everything that happened?’ to more truthful questions: what do I know of its cause? What duty lies within my ability? What did it disclose within me? What repair will prevent pain from settling within me as injustice or despair?

A Scene: Lady Zaynab (peace be upon her) before Ibn Ziyād

Because meanings show themselves in persons more clearly than in definitions, consider a scene from the life of the People of the House (peace be upon them). Lady Zaynab, daughter of ‘Alī (peace be upon them both), witnessed the killing of her brother al-Ḥusayn (peace be upon him), his family, and his companions, and was then driven with the captives to Kufa. It is related in al-Luhūf that ‘Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād said to her, gloating: ‘How did you find what God did with your brother and your family?’ She said: ‘I saw nothing but beauty.’^[21]

The words did not deny the calamity. Zaynab grieved and wept, and her firmness did not cancel her human sorrow. Nor was the statement a verdict that pain is beautiful in itself, or a demand that every afflicted person see tragedy in the same way. The beauty lay in the firmness of the orientation and fidelity to truth: those who had gone remained firm in their orientation to God, and the gloating could not wrench away her moral compass.

Here we see what a deeply settled orientation can do. Loss did not make her collapse before the man who gloated over her, nor did it wrench her point of reference from her heart. This is a station to be emulated according to one’s strength,

not a standard with which to scourge burdened selves; people differ in endurance and in their givens, and each is asked according to their practical scope.

Section Three: ‘To Test You as to Which of You Is Best in Deed’

God says: ‘He who created death and life to test you as to which of you is best in deed’ (Q 67:2). The verse gathers three meanings: that life is a field of trial; that people differ in their conditions and responses; and that the measure is excellence of deed, not the amount of activity alone.

‘To Test You’: The Appearance of Action in Time

God does not test in order to acquire knowledge he did not possess; his knowledge is prior and all-encompassing. Trial occurs in the world of action so that receptivity may become visible choice, human beings may know themselves, and responsibility may rest upon what actually issued from them rather than upon an untested claim.

Nor need every event be a detailed individual examination whose question we know. The whole of life is a field of trial, in the sense that blessing, hardship, ability, and incapacity place the human being in situations that call for action; but the particular wisdom in a specific event may remain unknown.

‘Which of You’: Different Stories and the Justice of the Reckoning

People differ in givens, environments, and abilities; excellence of deed therefore has no single template. A person is held to account according to their knowledge, practical scope, and the means made available to them, and is not asked to live someone else’s story.

Differences in practical scope do not turn every inclination into an excuse. A person is asked about what they knew and could do; they seek help where they are unable, and re-evaluate when their actual capacity widens or when some truth appears that they had not seen.

‘Best in Deed’: Soundness, Sincerity, and Mastery

Notice that excellence of deed is not intention alone. A good deed accords with truth in its outward form, is truthful in its inward purpose, and is performed with a degree of skill appropriate to ability. An unjust means does not become good through a righteous intention, and a correct form does not attain its full effect when its bearer deliberately seeks display.

A small, steady act in its proper place may be more truthful than a great surge that soon fades. But this is not to be used to belittle obligatory acts or beneficial abundance. Quality and quantity are both weighed, each on its proper scale.

Trial thus becomes a field for truthfulness in action, not a competition in the quantity of pain. What matters is how you responded to what you were given or denied, and what has begun to settle within you through that response.

The Four Dimensions in the Field of Trial

Because trial places the whole person within the situation, its effect can be read through the four aspects we have come to know: how was the body affected? What moved in the heart? How did the intellect interpret? To which orientation did the spirit return? These are questions for understanding, not ready verdicts on faith.

Trial may exhaust the body and narrow the field of choice; it may awaken an attachment or a fear in the heart; it may confine the intellect to a single interpretation; it may weaken the presence of spiritual meaning. We do not say, ‘the connected spirit does not break’; a person may break down psychologically and remain a believer. The duty is to address each aspect with what it needs of treatment, knowledge, remembrance, and help.

Trial may bring the whole person into the field at once. When a heavy affliction descends, the spiritual aspect is tested, the heart is laid bare, understanding is shaken, and the body aches — all at the same time. The response therefore needs your whole humanity, not a sermon detached from reality.

The Formative Environment: The Womb You Do Not See

The inherited environment explains part of your shakila; it does not excuse you from reviewing it. You may need a long time to see that what was ‘normal’ in your home was in truth fear, or harshness, or silence about the truth. Awareness here does not demand putting the whole past on trial; it asks you to understand what was passed on to you, so that you do not pass it on without choice.

The chosen environment is not a single decision. It is what you allow to occupy your schedule: accounts you follow, conversations you repeat, and places to which you return. Changing shakila may begin by changing a small cue that used to summon the same behaviour each day.

Nor is leaving a harmful environment enough; you need an alternative that carries the meaning you want to establish. Emptiness attracts the old habit. Righteous companionship is not surveillance but a presence that makes the good familiar, easier, and repeatable.

Trial does not come only as a single event. Sometimes it is the setting in which your days repeat: home, companionship, language, what you hear and see, and the examples that walk before you. All of these belong to the second womb in which the self undergoes becoming.

The formative environment is the network of material, social, and cultural circumstances, relationships, messages, models, incentives, opportunities, and obstacles that contribute over time to the formation and becoming of the whole person. It influences knowledge, loves, inclinations, habits, shakila, orientation, what a person notices and understands, what becomes familiar or easy, and what the person is able to do — without making anyone's course inevitable or abolishing agency.

The environment does not choose in your place, but it makes some meanings more immediate, some acts easier, and some deviations familiar until they lose their strangeness. What recurs around you may enter slowly into your way of seeing, then into your inclinations, and then into your

actions. Al-Ghazālī condensed the effect of companionship in his statement that ‘one nature steals from another without its bearer knowing’.^[22]

You are not responsible for beginnings you did not choose as though you had chosen them. Environment is a real cause in becoming: it may make some paths easier or more demanding, and it may narrow the field of choice or remove it in a particular event. Responsibility is therefore assessed according to practical scope, alternatives, and what was actually available. What you can change, or seek help in changing, enters into your striving.

In the age of screens, the environment is no longer confined to home and friends. What you follow each day, the language you consume, and the images repeatedly placed before you become a form of prolonged companionship, even when you are physically alone. Choosing what is allowed to recur around you is one aspect of your responsible participation in shaping the self.

Remember, too, that you are not only a recipient; you also form part of other people’s formative environment. A word of encouragement, mockery repeatedly heard, or a trait a child sees in you may make truth easier in another self or wrongdoing more familiar. The whole human being undergoes becoming within an environment but is not merely its product: the person is affected, responds, and participates — within their practical scope and through God’s aid — in what they become.

What Might Trial Disclose?

The kind of trial does not give you a fixed list of what it “means”. Wealth may disclose attachment, open a door of giving, or confront a person with a complex responsibility. Loss may disclose fragility, but before that it is a real loss deserving grief and mercy.

So the questions explore possibilities rather than make accusations: what did this event stir in me? Did it make me see a reliance I was not aware of? Do I need to set a boundary, seek treatment, or repent? And what right must I keep while I am in pain?

And in blessing there are questions too: has it widened my capacity for doing good, or increased my sense of self-sufficiency? Does gratitude still inform the work, or has success become an argument for superiority? God says: ‘and we test you with evil and with good, as a trial’ (Q 21:35).

A Test of Direction, Not a Performance of Purity

Trial does not require you to be free of grief, fear, or fatigue. These are human responses, and they may need care. What falls under your responsibility is what you do within your practical scope: do you seek the truth? Do you prevent the pain from becoming a licence for injustice? Do you return when you deviate?

The path is not about never falling, but about refusing to make falling your orientation. Not about smiling at every ache, but about describing it truthfully, seeking what mends it, and keeping your bond with God to the extent of your ability.

Good and Evil Both Provide a Field for Action

Blessing and hardship both open a field for action, but neither guarantees a single outcome. One person may give thanks in abundance while another transgresses; one may endure in hardship while another needs treatment before attempting any review. We do not measure people's faith by the speed or shape of their response.

When a believer is able to respond with patience or gratitude, that is good for them; but the good arises from their faith, their response, and God's aid — not because the harm itself has become good. Thus we preserve the meaning of trial without turning suffering into a slogan.

The question of pain itself remains: if the test is a field for action, how do we deal with the experience that may consume the very capacity for action? Here we move from the general meaning of trial to pain as a bodily and psychological reality that needs care.

Section Four: Pain — A Human Reality and a Possibility of Becoming

Pain is not an idea to be solved, but a personal sensory and emotional experience lived through the body and the self. Contemporary medical literature defines it as a personal experience shaped by biological, psychological, and social factors, and insists that a person's report of pain must be respected.^[23]

Pain may perform the function of an alarm: it moves you to pull your hand from the fire, to seek treatment, or to review a situation that is harming you. But not every pain is a moral

message, and not every pain results from negligence. It may arise from an illness that needs diagnosis, a trauma that calls for safety and treatment, or an injustice that must be resisted.

Pain May Open a Door, but Does Not Guarantee Growth

Society may pressure the sufferer to produce a “victory story” before healing. This demand can force them to present a strength they do not feel. Truthfulness is more merciful: some days are devoted only to survival, some to understanding, and some to one small step towards treatment. All can belong to the road.

A person’s worth is not measured by the speed of their recovery. Bodies, nervous systems, resources, and environments differ. What looks to another like a simple act may demand an enormous effort. Assessment according to practical scope preserves the dignity of the striver and prevents cruel comparisons.

If meaning arises from the experience, it need not erase the bitterness. You can say, “I learned from it, and it still hurt.” You may thank the person who helped and still wish the injustice had never happened. Meaning and refusal can coexist without contradiction.

Pain may awaken insight, mercy, or patience. It may also confuse a person, drain them, and temporarily limit their ability. What is called “post-traumatic growth” is a possibility some people realise in certain circumstances, not a mechanical result of exposure to hardship; the feeling of growth may not correspond to a lasting objective change.^[24]

God says: ‘And we shall surely let them taste the nearer punishment, short of the greater punishment, that perhaps they may return’ (Q 32:21). The verse comes in a context that distinguishes the believer from the defiantly disobedient and warns against turning away; it does not describe every person in pain. Al-Mizān and al-Amthal explain it as a punishment in this world while the opportunity for return remains. But opening a door is not the same as entering it: a person may take heed and respond, or persist in what they were doing.

In the light of the verse on straitness, the verses on anxious restlessness, and the exception of those who pray, this book proposes a more specific reading: some constriction arising from turning away and the tyranny of attachment may count among the instances of the “nearer punishment” that alert a person to return. What is meant is not natural need, but that what you look to for security becomes a point of reference that enslaves your decisions and renews your fear and anxious pursuit. We call its effect upon the way the self lives, makes judgements, and responds “formative constriction”; this is not the name of an illness. This is a proposed exegetical synthesis identifying a possible instance, not an explicit identification of this constriction in the two passages relied upon from al-Mizān and al-Amthal on Sūrat al-Sajda.^[25]

This synthesis does not make every pain a punishment. Nor is every torment through attachments an alert to return; it may accompany respite and a gradual drawing towards ruin. Even when it is an alert, it does not guarantee the person’s response. Feeling alone does not identify which of these conditions applies to you or the wisdom in what has happened to you. A verse, a word of counsel, or a blessing may also open the way to review. When an error becomes clear, return

means returning to truth through remembrance, repentance, and the restoration of rights — not merely seeking a calmer feeling.

So we do not say, “Whatever does not kill you makes you stronger.” Some things that do not kill you wound you, and the wound needs time and care. Nor do we tell the bereaved person to find meaning quickly. Faith may begin with the words: “I am in pain, and I do not understand — but I will not sever my path to God, and I will not refuse help.”

Patience does not mean suspending efforts to repel harm. You seek treatment, ask for support, leave the harmful environment, restore rights, weep, and pray for the removal of harm. Patience means preserving your orientation while doing all of this, and not allowing pain to drive you to wrong yourself or others or to despair of God’s mercy.

From Condemnation to Care

If the pain is bodily, begin with the body and do not reduce it to a “spiritual message”. If it is psychological, seek understanding and treatment, and do not carry it alone in the name of strength. If an error becomes clear to you, or an attachment competes with a right you know, repair it without asserting that it caused your pain or that God is punishing you through it. You may know what needs repair while the causes of the pain remain unclear.

Meaning does not cancel pain, and pain does not guarantee meaning. But the door of response remains open: a cause to understand, treatment to seek, a hand extended, repentance that repairs, and aid that steadies. What undergoes becoming in you is not the pain itself, but how you faced it and what settled from that encounter. To use an image: pain is not a

chisel that carves you by itself. A conscious response — with treatment, help, and divine aid — may allow patience, forbearance, or mercy to arise from the experience. The wound may still need time and treatment without this being a moral failure; the formative effect is not produced by pain alone, nor reducible to the sufferer's will.

Here appears the law that binds this chapter to what follows: resistance summons latent powers. Hardship does not create patience from nothing, but it gives you a place in which to choose it. Strength does not become an existential quality until the response is repeated and becomes settled in the self.

Section Five: Satan — An Enemy Who Serves Becoming despite Himself

Satan is a real enemy, intent on misguidance and harm; he embellishes, promises, and frightens. But he is not the origin of evil, nor a power set against God, nor the creator of appetite, anger, or envy in the self. He finds inclinations and receptivities, and tries to steer them away from the truth.

The Qur'an condensed the limit of his authority in his own words: 'I had no authority over you, except that I called you and you responded to me' (Q 14:22). Consider the two sides of this acknowledgement: a call from him and a response from you. He calls; he does not compel. But a repeated response opens a wider road for him and reinforces within the self a habit and a shakila that bring falsehood nearer.

How Does Your Enemy Serve Your Becoming?

Spiritual immunity shows itself in how quickly you recognise the pattern: a promise that glitters and then leaves emptiness, a fear that magnifies the loss, a justification that begins small. The first time, you may need a long struggle; with repetition, experience forms within you, enabling you to recognise the sign before the story is complete.

Strength does not mean overconfidence. Those who know the door of their weakness do not approach it to test their immunity, just as a person does not expose their body to infection to prove its health. Wisdom is to close the door, change the environment, seek help, and seek refuge in God.

An evildoer may prompt your awakening, but gains no right over you and no virtue from it. Your duty is to stop the person if you can, protect others, and guard your own heart so that resistance to injustice does not become another form of injustice.

Satan's existence is one source of trial, and his whispering is a formative resistance that summons discernment, will, remembrance, and trust in God. He intends misguidance, but God makes resistance to him — not obedience to him — material for striving and ascent. Each time you expose and refuse the deception, the self grows more able to recognise it and stand firm before it.^[26]

Nor is this law confined to Satan. A human evildoer may intend your humiliation, but resisting them may draw courage and justice from you. An affliction intends nothing, but facing it may draw out patience and mercy. Evil does not become good, nor does the wrongdoer become a praiseworthy teacher; God may bring from that pressure a fruit the wrongdoer did not intend.

The Metaphor of the ‘Vaccine of the Spirit’

The vaccine offers a useful analogy: the immune system learns to recognise danger and form defensive memory after controlled exposure to an antigen or its instructions. Vaccines are not all “a weak copy of the disease”: they may use a weakened or inactivated organism, a component of it, or genetic material that teaches the immune system to recognise it.^[27]

The point of resemblance here is limited: spiritual immunity is formed by resisting the whispering, not by obeying it. Every time you notice the deception, seek refuge in God, and choose the truth, discernment becomes quicker and the will firmer. Responding to the whispering, by contrast, feeds the disease instead of building immunity.

For this reason sins are not “required doses” for growth. Sin is a deviation; if it occurs, the door of repentance is open. A person does not need disobedience in order to grow strong; it is enough to face the call to it and choose otherwise. If they slip, immunity is built through the truthfulness of return and repair — not through the slip itself.

The Self, Satan, Habit, and Environment

Do not attribute every bad thought to Satan alone. It may come from desire within the self, a habit that has become settled, or an environment that feeds it; the doors may overlap. The distinction matters because the treatment differs: whispering is interrupted by seeking refuge and turning away; habit requires a change of context and a different pattern of repetition; a wound needs understanding and treatment; an environment needs distance or an alternative.

Satan is one source of trial, not the examiner and not a praiseworthy assistant. His intent is blameworthy, his enmity abiding, and taking him as an enemy is a requirement of servanthood. Do not grant him power he does not possess, make light of his call, or excuse yourself from responsibility for the response. If resistance leaves a person stronger, the good is from God's guidance and aid and from the servant's response — not because the whispering contains any good in itself.

Here whispering meets the shakila: the call presents itself, the person chooses a response, and repetition makes the pattern settle. The earlier this process is disclosed, the more able self-accounting and repentance are to interrupt its effects before it becomes a disposition.

But if this is the nature of the order, a question of the greatest importance remains: are you — as a human being — a mere recipient of what God decrees? Is your role confined to responding to what descends? Or is there a place for your will in changing what befalls you? And if everything is by measure, where does supplication stand?

These questions open the next inquiry: supplication within the divine decree.

Section Six: Supplication within the Divine Decree

If causes are real, where does supplication belong? It belongs within the order, not outside it. Supplication is one of the servant's acts and a cause established by the revealed law among the causes; it is itself encompassed by God's knowledge

and decree. The human being does not stand outside the decree in order to amend it, nor is supplication reduced to a psychological effect unrelated to divine governance.

The Lord of the Causes Is Not Governed by Them

God ordinarily orders the world through regularities and causes, but he is neither governed by them nor dependent upon them. He may bring about something outside the ordinary course and answer supplication through familiar or unfamiliar means; we cannot confine his act to a single form.

So we do not say that God acts only by adding a “higher force” to an established law, and we do not interpret ‘Be — and it is’ (Q 36:82) as a device within an independent system. All causes subsist through him; the ordinary and the extraordinary are both under his will and wisdom.

Supplication as an Act of Servanthood and a Cause

God says: ‘Your Lord has said: call upon me, and I will answer you’ (Q 40:60); and he says: ‘And when my servants ask you about me — surely I am near; I answer the call of the caller when he calls me’ (Q 2:186). Before it is a request for a result, supplication is an expression of need, a renewal of the bond, and an acknowledgement that causes are not independent.

Consider the construction of the verse: it does not say, “Say to them: I am near”; the reply comes directly: “surely I am near”. This arrangement returns supplication to its origin: it is not merely a means of obtaining what is requested, but a station of nearness and need. The servant asks about their Lord, and God answers first with nearness, before mentioning

the answer to supplication. The first fruit of supplication is therefore realised even before its outward effect appears: the heart returns to the One in whose hand the matter lies.

Supplication may change the suppliant: it clarifies need, gathers the heart, guides towards a decision, or opens the door of patience. By God's will, it may also have an outward effect: the use of a means becomes easier, an obstacle is averted, healing is granted, or an unforeseen opening appears. But the answer does not always take the exact form requested or come at the time the person chose.

It is related from the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family): 'Nothing turns back the decree except supplication.'^[28] Its meaning is not that supplication stands outside the decree and then changes it; supplication is itself among the causes God has placed within his decree. Its effect may be to avert an affliction or alter its course, just as it may transform the suppliant. We do not possess the map of the unseen, but we know that God commanded supplication and gave it an effect, and that the servant's act does not fall outside God's knowledge and decree.

We do not need to picture the decree as a "network of possibilities" in which supplication controls the transitions. It is enough to know that human choice, supplication, and the use of available means all lie within the decree, and that God knew them and brought them to pass without compelling the person to choose them.

Supplication Does Not Cancel the Cause

A sick person prays and seeks treatment; one who has been wronged asks for support and gathers evidence; a person seeking a livelihood prays, learns, and works. Abandoning an

available means and then demanding that supplication replace it is not trust in God; nor is relying on the means and forgetting the Lord a complete understanding.

God may open a door, grant strength to bear what has not been lifted, or avert a harm unknown to you. We do not claim a particular form for the answer, and we do not burden the supplicant with guilt because the requested outcome did not occur — as though sincerity were a contract guaranteeing the desired result.

Trust in God: The Heart's Work alongside the Limbs' Work

Trust in God is the heart's reliance upon God while one makes use of the available means. You work with excellence because work is a trust; then you refuse to treat the outcome as something your own power can command. If the plan fails, you review what can be reviewed and learn, without interpreting every disappointment as divine rejection or every success as approval.

This frees the human being from two burdens: a determinism that turns them into a passive recipient, and an illusion of control that makes them responsible for the entire universe. The human being is a real agent without independence; supplication and action are two expressions of servanthood.

From here we return to *kadh*. What unifies trial, pain, environment, whispering, and supplication is not a single interpretation imposed upon every event, but the stance of the servant who acts, resists, returns, and seeks help, knowing that the road to God passes through the causes, not outside them.

Section Seven: Chapter Conclusion

We have reached the end of the chapter. Chapter Four showed that the world operates through regularities and causes that are real without being independent, that receptivities and givens differ, and that evil is not an independent principle even though pain and harm are real. Here we have seen the human being within that world: amid hardship; in trials open to more than one meaning; within an environment that makes some paths easier or harder and may narrow choice in a given event; in pain that may open a possibility of growth; facing Satan, resistance to whose whispering can strengthen spiritual immunity; and within a decree that does not cancel supplication or action.

All this is a theoretical understanding of the order in which you have been placed. But knowledge alone does not move. The question that awaits you now, after all this, is: what do you do with this understanding? How do you translate it into movement?

The Qur'an condenses the answer in a single word that contains an entire journey of existence: *kadh*. And in a single scene it discloses what happens in the human being when the decree meets their will.

Kadh — The Inevitability of the Path and the Responsibility of Response

Earlier chapters presented *kadh* as the existential movement inseparable from human life: through time, every human being moves towards the encounter with God and their final destiny before him. Here the concept finds its specific place: *kadh* is the inescapability of the path, while your practical

answer is the response you choose within it — a response that may turn towards nearness or distance. The Qur'an condenses this movement in a single verse:

‘O human being, you are labouring towards your Lord with strenuous labour, and you will encounter him’
(Q 84:6).

The human being is in kadh by virtue of the journey towards the encounter. Effort and hardship may accompany kadh, but they do not define it; rest, blessing, and waiting also belong to the path and open a field for response. Kadh is neither aimless nor self-enclosed: as the Qur'an discloses it, it is movement “towards your Lord”. The difference between a response that purifies the human being and one that depletes them lies not in the amount of effort, but in the orientation of the response and what becomes settled through it.

Here the threads of the chapter meet: trial reveals; pain calls for response; environment assists or hinders; whispering entices but does not compel; supplication binds striving to the Lord of causes. Your responses in these places become conscious responses on the path of nearness when orientation and means are sound and rights preserved; they may turn into depletion when meaning is absent or harm left untreated.

Because kadh ends in an encounter, you meet God with what the self has become, not merely with what you have gathered. Yet the form carried into the hereafter is not the net sum of an independent effort. It is the fruit of real striving encompassed by God's mercy, guidance, and acceptance, and the servant is reckoned according to practical scope.

The Scene of the Ship — Where Truthfulness Is Born

Because concepts show themselves in scenes more than in words, consider a scene the Qur'an draws with the utmost precision, gathering for you in one image what we have seen in this chapter: hardship, trial, pain, and supplication.

‘It is he who conveys you across land and sea, until, when you are aboard ships and they sail with their passengers on a fair wind, and they rejoice in it, a storm wind strikes them, waves come upon them from every side, and they think they are surrounded. Then they call upon God, devoting their religion sincerely to him: “If you deliver us from this, we shall surely be among the grateful”’ (Q 10:22).

Consider the movement of the scene in four phases.

First, sailing in fair weather: ‘they sail with their passengers on a fair wind, and they rejoice in it’. This is the life of ease. Everything runs as it should, and the scene mentions no supplication of theirs in this state; their need had not yet appeared in the scene. It came into view only when the causes narrowed.

Second, the waves closing in: ‘a storm wind strikes them, waves come upon them from every side’. The situation is suddenly overturned. Consider ‘from every side’: no escape, no way to safety. Every support they leaned upon — the ship, the wind, experience, skill — collapses in a single moment.

Third, the laying bare: ‘and they think they are surrounded’. When a person becomes certain there is no way out, what lay hidden within them is laid bare. What they relied upon — wealth, strength, relationships, planning — falls all at once. Only one thing remains.

Fourth comes supplication in complete truthfulness: ‘then they call upon God, devoting their religion sincerely to him’. Consider “sincerely”. A person may pray in ease while the heart remains dispersed among many causes. Here, when those causes disappear from view, need appears in its purity and nothing remains before the heart but God.

The scene discloses how some illusions of independence fall away when the available means narrow and the heart returns to God with sincerity. It does not mean that a person is truthful only in catastrophe, or that ease prevents nearness. What is asked is that they carry into times of abundance the same sense of need that hardship lays bare, and not wait for the waves in order to know the Lord of the ship.

In Closing

We reach the end of the chapter with the meaning of friction in view. Not everything that opposes you is good in itself, and not every pain is part of a particular design whose secret you know. Yet confrontation opens a real field for choice, and through resistance to evil, patience in hardship, and work towards repair, God may bring forth qualities that ease alone would not have disclosed.

This understanding does not cancel the duty of treatment or resistance to injustice, and it does not turn grief into a deficiency of faith. It only prevents you from conceding to evil the last word, and from supposing that your past, your

environment, or your enemy's whispering has become an unalterable destiny. As long as the door of choice, repentance, and aid stays open, becoming remains possible.

The aim is that the human being should undergo becoming through their will within what God has enabled them to do, with God's guidance, aid, and tawfiq preceding their effort — not that they be compelled to perfection or create themselves independently. They choose, work, and ask for help; their repeated responses contribute to shaping the form their self comes to bear.

The qualities acquired in the field of friction — patience, truthfulness, certainty, and forbearance — are not ornaments left at the grave. When settled, they become part of the acquired existential form. This is the immortal self: the same human person, carrying not possessions but the knowledge, orientation, and dispositions that have become part of them. Friction is a field in which receptivities are realised in action.

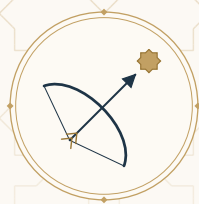
But knowledge of the order — however wide — is not enough by itself. The question this chapter opens is: how does the human being actually move within this order? What turns understanding into conduct, and knowledge into being? What makes a person pass from a reader of the law to a traveller on their road to God?

The next chapter begins the answer: the making of the will. It considers the will as the hinge joining knowledge to action, and Inner Truthfulness as the path by which the aspects of the self come into truthful accord under truth and fitra; narrowing the gap between what one knows and lives is one of its mechanisms. The chapter on substantial motion then explains how repetition becomes configuration and shakila.



A Pause for Reflection

Before you close the chapter, call to mind a pain or resistance you face. Do not assume that you know its hidden message, and do not require yourself to love it. Ask instead: what cause can I understand? What harm should be resisted? What help do I need? What response do I want to repeat until patience, justice, or trust in God becomes more deeply settled within me?



Chapter Six —

The Making of the Will

Prelude — From Knowledge to Movement

Now that we have come to know the aspects of the human being, the regularities of the world, and the places of friction, one question remains: what carries knowledge into action? A person may see the truth and feel its beauty, yet fail to act upon it. Enthusiasm may burn for an hour and then give way to habit. Knowledge can illuminate the road without moving the foot; feeling can stir the heart without becoming a decision. Between perception and realisation stands the will.

The will is not the whole of the human being's reality. The human being is one self, read through the bodily dimension, heart, intellect, and spirit, and carrying a history, relationships, and givens. The will is the hinge of choice: through it, the self settles upon a possible act and turns the knowledge, value, motive, and intention present within it into a practical direction attributable to the person.

Nor does the will work alone. Exhaustion weakens it; meaning strengthens it; environment assists it; the intellect corrects it; the heart moves it; revelation guides it. So we do not turn it into an independent hero, and we do not make its weakness in one situation a final verdict on the person.

And when choices repeat, the will does not remain an isolated moment; it opens a road in the self. An act that was burdensome may become easier; a habit that once ruled may weaken. In this way the will becomes a bridge from knowledge to the shakila.

Before asking how the will grows strong, we must recognise its limits. It does not create ability from nothing, impose the result upon the world, or dispense with God. It chooses and takes the available means within what it has been granted, asking for help throughout.

The Will: The Hinge of Choice

The will is not a surge of enthusiasm. A person may desire good in one moment and give way at the first sign of fatigue because desire never became decision, or decision a stable practice. The will grows strong when the self repeats the choice in small details, reduces the friction that drains it, and binds action to a meaning larger than mood.

One of the will's tools is to make the decision before the situation arrives. A person who knows that their phone steals their attention does not wait each time for a heroic battle; they put it away. Someone who knows that anger blinds them learns to delay the reply. Arranging the environment does not diminish the virtue of the will; it gives it the chance to work in its proper place.

The will does not always succeed. A new habit may be interrupted, or the self may fall back after progress. What matters is that the person not turn the stumble into an identity. They review the causes, adjust the plan, seek help, and begin from the point they have actually reached.

The strength of the will is affected by the body, meaning, and companionship. Prolonged fatigue weakens choice, an unclear purpose makes decisions unfocused, and a hostile environment consumes energy. Building the will is therefore an integrated undertaking, not a moral accusation against anyone who is unable to act in a particular situation.

Consider the cosmos around you. The Qur'an presents created beings as subject to God, each according to its creation and order: the sun and moon in their courses, inanimate things through the regularities God has established for them, angels through obedience and glorification, and animals through their natures and forms of guidance. Alongside the human being's creational subjection stands a moral obligation in which knowledge, purpose, and choice appear:

‘Have you not seen that all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth prostrate to God — the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the trees, the animals, and many among humankind? Yet upon many the punishment has become due. Whomever God abases, none can honour. Surely God does what he wills’ (Q 22:18).

Notice the arrangement of the verse. All creatures are first presented in a single form; when human beings are mentioned, however, the statement divides into two: “many among humankind” and “many upon whom the punishment has come due”. This division reveals the sphere of moral obligation. The verse joins universal cosmic prostration to the position of the morally responsible human being. Existents are subject to God in the origin of their existence and in their regularities; the human being can conform through chosen action to the reality of that subjection, or disobey and deserve the reckoning. This does not require us to deny every other creature any kind of perception or choice. The point is that human moral responsibility rests upon the knowledge, intention, and ability the person has been given.

The human being differs from many existents in that their moral acts occur within a field of awareness and choice. This does not mean that the human will is absolute, nor that the human being is the only being in existence to possess any kind of choice. It means that obligation and responsibility are tied to what has reached the person, what they have understood, and what they can do or refrain from doing within their practical scope.

God says: ‘By the self and the One who proportioned it, then inspired it with its depravity and its God-consciousness: the one who purifies it has truly succeeded, and the one who debases it has truly failed’ (Q 91:7–10). The human being was shown the two paths; success and failure were then tied to whether the person purified or debased the self. Clarification does not cancel choice, and choice does not stand independently of guidance.

From here we understand the trust: an ability and a responsibility, not merely a privilege. God says: ‘We offered the trust to the heavens, the earth, and the mountains... and the human being bore it’ (Q 33:72). We do not confine the verse’s meaning to the will alone; but choice and obligation are among the clearest things that disclose its weight.

Nor should the human being’s relation to God be described in terms of a “resemblance in choice”. God creates will and ability; nothing resembles him. The human being is a created servant whose action is real at the created human level. Human moral distinction does not lie in possessing a will resembling God’s will, but in being tried through choice and held responsible for the use of what has been granted.

The human being was not given moral perfection ready-made. They were given *fitra*, receptivities, guidance, and a field of action; through choices and deeds they participate in shaping the self and move from potentiality towards actuality, degree by degree, within the regularities and through divine aid.

God says: ‘He has subjected to you all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth — all from him’ (Q 45:13). And subjection is responsibility: what lies in your hands is a field of trust, not material for the unrestricted exercise of your desire. Through wealth, knowledge, time, and relationships, your choices become visible — and so does what settles within you.

The earth is not merely a “factory” set against the Garden; it is an abode of work and trial, while the Garden is an abode of recompense. On earth the human will becomes visible amid desire, fear, environment, and limited ability. Deeds are therefore choices, not mechanical motions.

Truthful choice may raise the human being, while corrupt choice may cast them down. Yet no absolute comparison between human and angelic worship should be made where the texts do not support one. It is enough to say that human obedience receives its moral meaning from knowledge, purpose, and striving within what God has enabled.

From here comes the measure of striving: ‘and that the human being shall have only what he has striven for, and that his striving will be seen’ (Q 53:39–40). Notice the restriction: the verse does not say “what was gathered for him” or “what he was granted”, but “what he has striven for”. This does not make every grace or fruit a human production; it establishes responsibility for one’s own striving and prevents reliance upon another person’s striving in place of one’s own.

Striving is truly an act of yours, but it is not independent: ability, opportunity, guidance, and steadfastness are all from God. And the result may exceed your ability or contradict your expectation — which is why the Fatiha joins action with the seeking of help: ‘You alone we worship, and you alone we ask for help’ (Q1:5).

The will, then, is the self’s decisive settling upon a possible act and its turning towards bringing that act about. It is a real cause within action, but it does not dictate reality or create receptivity, alternatives, or results. It grows stronger through meaning, sound habit, a supportive environment, and the seeking of help, and it operates within the network of causes and practical scope.

And when the will turns towards the truth, a finer question remains: do you want what you say you want? And do your actions embody what you know? Here we pass from the strength of choice to its truthfulness.

Even your knowledge of God and your guidance towards him are gifts that precede your decision. The Supplication of Abū Ḥamza al-Thumālī says: ‘Through you I knew you; you directed me to you and called me to you; were it not for you, I would not know what you are.’^[29] Consider the sequence of the supplication: “Through you I knew you”, not through my own power; “you directed me to you”, not through my own ingenuity; “were it not for you, I would not know what you are”. Even the will by which you turn to him is his gift. The nearer people draw to God, the more deeply they recognise his grace rather than their own merit. This prior gift does not erase your choice; it reveals it as the choice of a servant who subsists through the Lord’s giving.

A corrupt person may show a strong will through organisation and endurance in pursuit of their goal. Strength of will is a partial existential perfection that increases the capacity for decision, steadfastness, and action; the truthfulness of the will concerns its orientation: does it serve truth and servanthood, or desire and arrogance? Strength answers: how steadfast can you remain? Truthfulness answers: in which direction do you remain steadfast? Strength of will is therefore not a complete virtue unless it is ordered within a sound orientation.

A will connected to God does not mean a will that never tires or breaks down psychologically; the believer is human. It means that believers do not treat weakness as though it severed them from divine aid, or strength as though it were purely their own possession. When unable, they ask for help; when they slip, they repent; when they succeed, they give thanks.

Inner Truthfulness: The Truthful Accord of the Self's Aspects under Truth and Fitra

A person may know the truth and yet live far from it. They may make claims their actions do not bear out, declare an end while their habits lead elsewhere, or see a fault within and cover it with excuses until they forget its name. This distance is a gap that Inner Truthfulness exposes and works to narrow. Narrowing gaps is among its mechanisms and results, not its complete definition. Consistency has no normative value unless it takes truth as its point of reference and accords with what fitra calls for, as clarified by revelation and discerned by the intellect.

Inner Truthfulness is a graduated formative path in which the four aspects of the self come into truthful accord and harmony with truth as their point of reference and in accordance with what fitra calls for: the intellect understands and discerns truth; the heart accepts it through love and intention; the spirit turns to God and the end of servanthood; and the human being embodies it through the body in word and deed. The will is the decisive act of the self linking these aspects; it is not an additional dimension. Imagination, shakila, and the effects of action reveal or affect the path. This accord becomes settled through tazkiya, including confronting the self, exposing gaps, self-accounting, repentance, and repair within practical scope. It is a path of growth, not a claim to perfection.

Nor is “inner harmony” alone sufficient. A person may be internally coherent around a corrupt end and organised in injustice. “Inner” identifies where truthfulness is realised, not the source of truth: truthfulness takes truth as its point of reference, not merely what you find within. In this book’s

reading, the truthful accord of the aspects discloses an inward aspect of fidelity to the covenant: that your acceptance, intention, and action should accord with what you have known of the requirements of God's lordship and your servanthood to him. The connection between truthfulness and fidelity is supported by God's words: 'Among the believers are men who have been true to what they pledged to God' (Q 33:23, relevant passage). Inner Truthfulness thus explains a central aspect of uprightness, but does not encompass it on its own or replace the other laws of origination.

Feeling, in this definition, does not mean every passing emotion. A truthful person may grieve, a courageous person may fear, and a worshipper may experience spiritual dullness. What is meant is the orientation of feeling that the self adopts and continues to nourish: what it loves, accepts, recoils from, and settles upon. Truthfulness does not ask you to deny feelings, but to acknowledge and educate them.

Inner weariness may have bodily, psychological, or social causes; do not infer a moral gap from anxiety alone. Nor are all gaps alike. You may know the truth and turn towards it while an old habit remains burdensome: this is a formative lag. Illness, coercion, or a real obstacle may prevent you from acting: this is an actual constraint. You may know the truth and be able to act on it, yet act against that knowledge and protect the contradiction through justification: here the gap is adopted. These conditions may overlap, calling for understanding and help. The question is not, "Did you suffer or stumble?" but, "How do you respond to what has become clear, and what can you repair?"

The Road of Truthfulness: Disclosure, Then Decision, Then Repetition

The hardest masks are those that carry part of the truth. You may be devoted to quality while that devotion hides a fear of criticism. You may serve others while the service feeds your need to avoid rejection. Truthfulness does not annul the good; it purifies it of the motive that enslaves it.

You may need an external mirror, because the self does not see all its stratagems: a faithful counsellor, therapist, scholar, or friend who knows you and does not fear you. Accepting feedback is not surrender to people's opinions; it tests the image you hold against its real effects.

Truthfulness with yourself does not mean broadcasting everything within you to other people. Some thoughts should remain private while you work through them, and some secrets are a trust. What is required is that you not lie to yourself or to God, and that concealing a fault not become a pretext for abandoning its repair.

And the nearer the word comes to the act, the more energy is freed. You no longer need to maintain two narratives: how you live and what you display. That is why truthfulness is a strength before it is a comfort; it gathers the self around a single reality from which it can begin.

Disclosure begins when a truth or an area needing repair becomes clear. You may discern a good to strengthen or an error to correct. A verse, a word of counsel, or an experience may alert you, but being alerted is not the same as discerning the truth through clarification and evidence. The same verse or counsel may both alert and clarify. Disclosure here is not an unveiling of the unseen, nor a judgement produced by feeling.

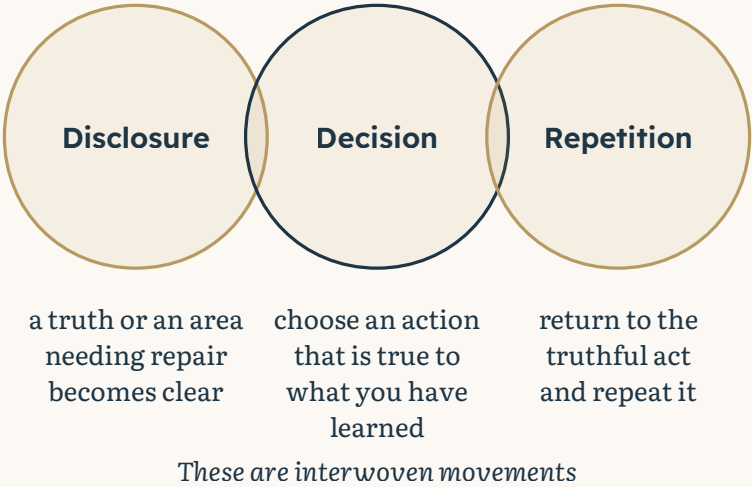
When a motive becomes clear, do not call envy “devotion to justice” or the pursuit of praise “a higher purpose”; nor should you judge yourself on the basis of what has not become clear.

Then you choose an action that is true to what you have learned, within your knowledge, actual capacity, and practical scope. When it becomes clear that you have wronged someone, knowing this is not enough: you apologise and repair what you can. When you see a right you have neglected, you seek to restore it. The beginning may be learning, asking for help, or changing the environment. The response remains a real choice; the self may protect the wrongdoing through justification instead of confronting it.

Then you return to the truthful act and repeat it, seeking God’s help. The heart may lag behind understanding, or an old habit may return; you review the cause and resume repair without humiliation. Constancy prepares the way for a pattern to become settled, but repetition alone does not guarantee this. Knowledge, truthfulness, practice, environment, help, and divine aid are needed. These are interwoven movements: action may disclose what was not apparent at the beginning, leading you to review the decision and correct what you repeat.

Works on ethics extend truthfulness beyond the tongue. Al-Ghazālī speaks of truthfulness in word, intention, resolve, fidelity, and action, and links the perfection of its ranks to *siddiqiyya*.^[30] In the Qur’an, truthfulness to one’s pledge becomes visible in a concrete stance: ‘Had they been true to God, it would have been better for them’ (Q 47:21).

Repentance is part of this road, not a confession of final failure. Self-accounting discloses where the gap lies; repentance restores the orientation; repair confirms the truthfulness of the return. The truthful person is not someone who never slips, but someone who makes the slip neither a mask nor a station.



Deep-Rooted Truthfulness (Siddiqiyya): The Graduated Summit of the Path of Inner Truthfulness

Deep-rooted truthfulness (siddiqiyya) is the graduated summit of the path of Inner Truthfulness. In it, the truthful accord and ordering of the self's aspects under truth and servanthood reach their highest degrees, while still admitting variation in intensity and scope. It is not a stopping point or a title easily claimed, does not imply infallibility in anyone other than the infallible, and does not license the

classification of people or judgement of inward states. A person may be truthful in one respect and still striving in another; settled truthfulness does not rule out error and the need to return.

The “receding of an enduring gap” is more precise than claiming the disappearance of every momentary difference. The intellect may reach a meaning before the heart, and the heart may follow through striving. A rejected thought may occur. The siddiq does not choose that thought or build an orientation upon it, but returns quickly to the truth that has become settled.

In siddiqiyya, outward life truthfully corresponds to inward reality without becoming theatrical. A person may do good in secret or remain silent where speech would become display. Correspondence does not mean revealing everything inward; it means that the inward life does not contradict the truth presented outwardly.

Siddiqiyya and tranquillity are therefore not identical. Tranquillity is a graduated station of the heart arising from settled knowledge of God and remembrance of him, servanthood to him, and the self’s firm grounding in God as its ultimate point of reference; siddiqiyya describes the truthful accord of the self’s aspects and their ordering under truth and servanthood. They may come together in different degrees, and tranquillity may reach high degrees along the path of truthfulness and siddiqiyya.

The road of truthfulness narrows the gap. At its summit, truthfulness becomes settled and the enduring gap adopted by the self recedes: the gap between what the person knows of truth, what settles in the heart, and what is intended, said, and done. This station is what we call siddiqiyya.

God says of Abraham (peace be upon him): ‘And mention in the Book Abraham: he was a *siddiq*, a prophet’ (Q 19:41). And he describes Mary (peace be upon her) as ‘a *siddiqa*’ (Q 5:75). The Qur’anic word indicates an exalted rank of truthfulness realised in the human being — not merely the truth of a single report.

And the Qur’an places the *siddiqin* in the highest ranks of guidance, with those God has blessed: ‘Whoever obeys God and the Messenger — they are with those God has blessed: the prophets, the *siddiqin*, the martyrs, and the righteous; and what excellent companions they are’ (Q 4:69).

In the Imami tradition, al-Kāfī describes Fāṭima al-Zahrā’ (peace be upon her) as ‘a *siddiqa* and a martyr’, and the title al-Siddiqa al-Kubrā — the Greatest Siddiqa — became widespread within its specific doctrinal and historical context.^[31] It is also related from the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family): ‘Surely God is angered at Fāṭima’s anger and pleased at her pleasure.’^[32] The title al-Siddiqa al-Kubrā remains a traditional title or description in its particular context, not a general analytical rank. This book draws on these texts to illustrate the settling of truthfulness and the gathering of knowledge, heart, intention, word, and deed around the truth, without opening here other doctrinal questions the book’s course does not need.

Siddiqiyya is not the absence of human feelings, but the absence of a settled doubleness in relation to truth. The self of a *siddiq* may ache, grieve, and fear; but it does not inwardly adopt an orientation that contradicts what it has known, nor make its outward appearance a permanent mask for a different inward state.

Nor is *siddiqiyya* a departure from humanity, or the absence of every passing thought. Its summit is the settling of truthfulness and the receding of the settled gap the self maintains in relation to truth. If fear, pain, or a rejected thought arises, it does not turn into a second orientation; the outward remains a truthful expression of the inward.

The Self's Integration and Inner Strength

The divided self spends much of its strength on justification, concealment, and hesitation. When it becomes more integrated, it does not become capable of everything; rather, it recovers energy that was previously lost within. The strength at issue is not a sheer increase in willpower, but a reduction in inner depletion.

This strength works within the limits of a created human being: they may tire and need rest, fear and ask for help, err and review themselves. But it prevents division from consuming their energy, and gathers their ability around one orientation that draws its firmness and its aid from God.

When settled gaps recede, the aspects of the self come into greater truthful accord and harmony under truth and *fitra*, and their integration grows stronger. The causes of dispersion, conflict, and competing veils decrease, while the self's tranquillity, firmness, and stability increase. This is the integration of the self intended here. 'Existential simplicity' remains a secondary philosophical description in Şadrian terminology.^[33]

From this integration arises greater inner strength within the human being's limits and givens, because less of their energy is wasted in contradiction and justification. This strength draws its firmness and aid from God. It is not a

strength of self-sufficiency but of conscious dependence; not separation from the world, but a greater capacity to enter it with truth and mercy.

Your whole existence subsists through God and depends upon him in origin, continuance, and effect. This dependence does not erase the self; it restores the self to its reality as a created and responsible being that undergoes becoming through what you were given, what befell you, and what you knew, chose, and did — never independent for a moment of the Creator and his aid.

As you continue along the path of Inner Truthfulness through guidance, tazkiya, and aid, conduct is not the only thing that changes; the existential form is transformed. Dispersion and doubleness diminish, the aspects of the self gather more fully around truth, and a share of siddiqiyya becomes settled. Strength, tranquillity, and contentment appear, and selfhood reaches its human perfection in servanthood to God.

Selfhood, in this sense, is completed not by independence from God but by subsisting through him and living in servanthood to him. The wisdom, true knowledge, upright will, strength in truth, certainty, tranquillity, and contentment that become actual within the self are not luggage it carries; they are the form it comes to bear.

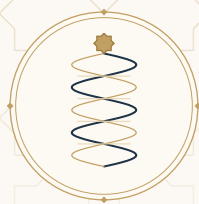
From here we understand the relation between the truthful accord of the aspects, the self's integration, and the increase of its tranquillity, firmness, and stability. It is tranquillity in God, not the absence of pain or fear. Siddiqiyya is the graduated summit of the path of Inner Truthfulness, and servanthood is the axis around which these meanings are ordered.

The question remains: how does the truth turn from a meaning you know into a configuration from which your acts issue? And how does repeated choice become a shakila? This is what the next chapter explores: substantial motion.



A Pause for Reflection

Before you close the chapter, look at one gap between the truth that has become clear to you and what you repeat in practice. Do not settle for condemning yourself, and do not demand that all the gaps close in a day. Name it without a mask, choose one action that is true to what you know, then repeat it until a new course begins within you.



Chapter Seven —

Substantial Motion

Prelude: From Act to Shakila

The shakila may begin to form before a person possesses full awareness: through the language of the home, the family's way of seeing money, fear, and other people, and its manner of responding to error. These layers help explain an initial inclination, but do not decide the end. Once recognised, they become open to review in differing degrees.

The shakila is not always uniform. A person may be generous with family and miserly with others, courageous at work and fearful in relationships, truthful in financial dealings and hesitant in admitting error. The picture is composite, which is why change requires a specific focus rather than a general verdict.

It is a mistake to turn shakila into an excuse: “that is simply how I am.” What you are now is the outcome of a history, not an unalterable destiny. The opposite mistake is to ignore how

deeply a pattern may have settled and demand an overnight upheaval. Tazkiya recognises the depth of habit and builds a realistic road towards change.

The act both discloses and reinforces the shakila. When you resort to evasion under pressure, the act reveals a prior inclination and then strengthens it. When you choose truthfulness despite fear, it reveals a receptivity for truth and gives it new force. In the same moment, you are reading and writing your own self.

Your deeds are not separate incidents that end when their moment ends. Every act leaves a trace in the self, and every repeated trace seeks to settle. With time, you no longer do something only because you decided to do it at that moment, but because a configuration has formed within you that inclines you towards it and makes it more readily expressed in action.

The Qur'an names this inward form shakila: 'Say: each acts according to his shakila' (Q 17:84). In the framework of this book, the verse presents shakila as an inward ground from which a person tends to act without being compelled. Shakila is not a passing intention, an isolated habit, or an intellectual lens alone. It is a relatively settled psychological and ethical structure at a stage of human becoming. It includes knowledge, conceptions, evaluations, loves, intentions, inclinations, habits, dispositions, and the settled effects of temperament, body, upbringing, environment, experience, and choice. It makes certain ways of perceiving, responding, and acting more likely without compelling them. Fitra is the origin of its creation and the standard by which it is measured, not one element within shakila.^[34]

A settled configuration, or disposition (*malaka*), is narrower than the *shakila*: a specific quality that has settled in the self — truthfulness, patience, or miserliness — until the matching act has become easier. The *shakila* gathers the whole set of configurations, conceptions, and inclinations working together.

But the *shakila* does not strip you of choice. It inclines and does not compel; it influences and does not necessitate. Some of its elements did not begin by your choice, but your responsibility attaches to what you know, accept, continue to nourish, and persist in repeating. That is why repentance and *tazkiya* remain possible as long as life lasts.

Motion in the Core of the Self

Deep transformation does not mean that every daily change reaches the self's governing structure; many states pass and disappear. It is a change within becoming that reaches basic conceptions, the ordering of loves, orientation, and settled dispositions, altering what the person becomes rather than outward conduct alone. It may move towards perfection or deficiency; "deep" describes the level of change, not its moral value.

The beginner sees patience as deprivation; then they learn that it preserves orientation; then they experience its effect; then bearing pain with meaning becomes easier. The word 'patience' has not changed; the self that receives it has. This is the transition that concerns this book.

Nor is the motion always an ascent. The bad habit also moves the self; and knowledge that feeds pride settles it more firmly in a wrong direction. So the motion needs a measure — and the measure is the orientation, not the intensity of activity.

What is transformed in the self appears in the world: a more just decision, a less harmful tongue, a greater capacity to defer acting on desire. We do not test the claim of transformation by feeling alone; we look at what has become easier, what has become harder, and what the person leaves in those around them.

The first origination offers a close example: a drop, then a clinging form, then a lump, then bones clothed with flesh, and finally a child emerging into the world — one continuous becoming, not pieces pasted together. If *shakila* is an acquired form, by what process does it arise? Here *Şadr al-Muta'allihīn*'s concept of substantial motion helps: a material existent changes not only in accidental qualities; transformation reaches the depth of its existence. The book draws on this position to explain how change can reach the self's mode of existence, as knowledge, intention, and action accumulate until what was potential becomes actual. Yet accepting substantial motion is not a condition for accepting the basic meanings of becoming, *tazkiya*, or repentance. It is a supporting philosophical account, not their sole foundation.

We do not use the concept as a glittering slogan, and we do not claim that every detail of the modern self was explained by the philosophers. We draw on it only to explain how change can reach the self's depth: the human being is not an unchanging interior that merely swaps outward behaviours;

what they repeat with awareness and choice may become a configuration, and that configuration enters their acquired existential form.

This is why qualities are not carried as luggage. Wisdom that has become settled, mercy that has become second nature, and envy long nourished are not objects placed beside you; they are modes of the self's existence. The same self continues, but after these qualities settle it is no longer exactly as it was.^[35]

Orientation: Not Every Motion Is Growth

Orientation can deviate without its label changing. A person may continue saying "for God" while the work gradually becomes a pursuit of image or influence. Self-accounting therefore asks not only about the slogan, but what delights you in the result and what breaks you when people fail to see it.

Nor does the orientation cancel partial goals. You work, marry, learn, build an institution. But it sets these goals inside a larger end, so that loss in one of them does not become the collapse of all meaning, and success in it does not become a licence to overstep the truth.

And the orientation may need renewal, because life keeps reordering its priorities. What was a means turns into an end if you do not review it; what was a trust turns into an identity. Remembrance and self-accounting return things to their places.

The powers and partial perfections of the self may increase, strengthening it in knowledge, understanding, will, and ability. Yet a corrupt response can turn that strength into an

instrument of deeper estrangement, reinforcing the proof and increasing accountability. Movement is not measured by quantity alone: what does it increase within you, and where does it carry you?

The end is the highest aim: servanthood to God, and the seeking of his pleasure and an encounter with him. The orientation is the actual direction the self's motion takes across time. You may declare an end, while your habits and decisions disclose your practical orientation.

Intention is a purpose that directs an act in its moment; orientation is broader: the pattern disclosed by the overall configuration of intentions, choices, and deeds. A single act may carry a righteous intention while the self has not yet settled upon a unified orientation.

Nor does a good intention suffice to correct a wrongful act or make up for a neglected duty. God says: 'And whoever desires the hereafter and strives for it with its due striving, being a believer — such striving will be appreciated' (Q 17:19). The verse brings together desire, the striving that accords with it, and faith.

Action tests intention, while intention gives action its spirit. Growth through tazkiya is the growth of the self's powers and perfections and their ordering within a positive response to truth and servanthood. An increase of power under a corrupt orientation is formative intensification, not tazkiya. Every growth through tazkiya is a praiseworthy formative intensification, but not every intensification is growth through tazkiya.

Repentance and Self-Accounting: Correcting the Motion and Renewing the Orientation

Sound self-accounting is specific: a situation, motive, action, effect, and step of repair. The vague question “Why am I bad?” produces a vague sense of shame that changes nothing. You examine what you did, not to reduce yourself to the act, but to prevent its repetition.

Remorse for an error that has become clear calls you to repent and repair what you can, not to condemn your whole self or keep it perpetually on trial. You seek forgiveness and change what you can of the course in which you erred. The aim is a truthful return to the truth, not merely the removal of an uncomfortable feeling. Seek the gentleness and help you need.

And when the error touches people’s rights, an inward state does not suffice. You restore a right, or ask forgiveness where the asking does not increase the harm, or repair an effect as far as possible. Repentance restores the relation with God; justice calls for addressing what happened within his creation.

Because you are moving even when inattentive, you need a pause that reveals the direction rather than a condemnation that keeps you motionless. Self-accounting looks truthfully at what has been sent ahead: what did you repeat, which inclination did you feed, and in what direction have your actions carried you? When you find good, praise God and strengthen it; when you find deviation, name it and specify what must be repaired.

Repentance is not a passing regret or a word that merely passes the lips; it is a return to God: remorse that awakens, abandonment of the deviation, a resolve not to reinforce the same pattern, and repair of what can be repaired. Al-‘Allāma al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī explains that the servant’s repentance is enveloped by *tawfiq* from God before it and by acceptance and mercy after it. ^[36]

Repentance changes the orientation from the moment of its truthfulness, but it does not make the effects of settled habits, rights owed to other people, and the real-world consequences vanish automatically. What has settled may need repeated action in the opposite direction; what has occurred in reality may need the restoration of a right or a remedy for its effects. This return may be accompanied by the hardship of resisting a habit and the remorse that comes with facing an error. That is different from persisting in turning away, even when the effects of the two overlap within a single experience. Continued pain alone is therefore not evidence of continued turning away, just as its disappearance alone is not evidence of uprightness.

Within this framework, we read uprightness as renewed fidelity to what your declaration “My Lord is God” requires. God says: ‘Surely those who say, “Our Lord is God”, and then remain upright’ (Q 41:30, relevant passage). You stand firm upon the truth, repent when you deviate, and repair what you can. Do not make prior perfection a condition of beginning, or the slow change of a habit an argument for abandoning the road. The orientation may become sound before a righteous response becomes easy; here *tazkiya* works to bring the *shakila* closer to it.

This is why repentance does not make you start from zero; it prevents your past from becoming your destiny, and opens a new direction for your motion. Self-accounting discloses; repentance redirects; repair confirms the return; and the new repetition reshapes the shakila.

This meaning is gathered in what is related from the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family): ‘The believer is tried and oft-returning.’^[37] The ḥadīth does not praise falling into trial, and does not make sin a condition of growth or a required dose on the road. It describes the reality of the striving human being, and specifies what marks the believer in it: that when they are tried, they return. The difference is not between one who is tested and one who is not, but between one who protects deviation through justification and one who confronts it through repentance and repair, before it settles or after it has settled.

A person who returns should therefore neither think their sin has ruined everything and give way to despair, nor make light of it and grow comfortable with relapse. The door of repentance stands open as long as life lasts; and the return itself is among what God loves: ‘Surely God loves those who constantly repent, and loves those who purify themselves’ (Q 2:222).

How to Keep Movement from Draining You

Among the things that most exhaust a person is confusing effort with depletion — supposing that fatigue alone proves nearness and a great deal of work proves ascent. In truth, fatigue alone proves neither nearness nor distance: it may be the fatigue of ascent or the fatigue of wandering.

A person is often exhausted less by the work itself than by the loss of its meaning. A heart that knows why it works can endure much, while a heart emptied of meaning may stagger under lighter tasks. Meaning does not cancel bodily limits or the need for rest and treatment: some exhaustion is illness requiring care, and some results from an unjust distribution of burdens that must be corrected. Yet when meaning is present, it lightens the load and preserves orientation.

God says: ‘And those who strive in our cause — we shall surely guide them to our ways; and surely God is with those who act with excellence’ (Q 29:69). Notice the structure of the promise: it does not say, ‘We shall remove hardship from them’, but, ‘We shall surely guide them to our ways’. The verse does not promise the end of hardship, but guidance that accompanies striving in God’s cause and keeps the traveller from becoming lost on the road. Not every effort opens a way; orientation and meaning are decisive.

Serenity may descend upon a person in the midst of the work, not only after it ends: ‘It is he who sent down serenity into the hearts of the believers, that they might increase in faith upon their faith’ (Q 48:4). Notice that the place of descent named in the verse is ‘the hearts of the believers’. Circumstances may remain disturbed while serenity descends inwardly, and God may also open outward causes of relief and ease. Serenity is not an end to movement, but tranquillity accompanying the one who moves. Nor do we make feeling alone the measure of orientation: a believer may be anxious because of a bodily condition or an overwhelming circumstance while remaining on the path, and a heedless person may feel at ease for a time.

So that movement does not drain you, give each aspect its due: do not exhaust the body until it collapses, neglect the heart until it hardens, overload the intellect until it becomes scattered, or forget the spirit until it withers. Imam Mūsā al-Kāzīm (peace be upon him) is reported to have counselled dividing time among intimate converse with God, the affairs of livelihood, the company of trustworthy brothers who know one's faults and are inwardly sincere, and an hour for permissible pleasure — making the last a support for the other hours.^[38] Lawful rest is not a subtraction from the path, but one of its supporting causes.

How Knowledge Becomes Part of One's Being

Between a piece of information and a settled disposition lie stages. You hear that forbearance is a virtue; then you understand why; then you notice your anger; then you keep silent once; then you learn to express yourself without wronging anyone; then you repeat. In each stage there is new knowledge — not only about forbearance, but about yourself and the conditions of your capacity for it.

Intention also affects the nature of the trace. A person may control anger for fear of damaging their image and thereby learn suppression rather than forbearance. They may control it out of respect for another's right, and justice grows within them. The outward action looks the same, but orientation helps determine which disposition takes shape.

Nor must you wait for complete sincerity before acting. You begin with an intention mixed with impurities and then review it. The act itself may become a mirror that discloses the

seeking of praise. The condition of the path is that you neither accept impurity as the end nor abandon the good because the inward life is not yet purified.

As a disposition settles, the need for a detailed decision lessens, but freedom does not disappear. The truthful person can lie, but lying has become more burdensome and alien to them. The disposition makes action easier without compelling it, which is why praise, blame, and repentance retain their meaning.

Knowledge, intentions, deeds, and dispositions enter the self's becoming and existential form, and their realities and effects appear in the hereafter in forms suited to that origination, as God discloses and judges them. Recompense is thus connected to the reality of the deed and to what the person has become. This does not make recompense a mechanism independent of God, nor does this account exhaust reward, punishment, forgiveness, and intercession. It neither permits us to describe the details of the hereafter without a text nor licenses judgement on the destinies of individuals.^[39]

Knowledge begins as a report that reaches you. You then understand it, assent to it, and test it in a situation. If you choose to act upon it, it leaves a trace. When the action is repeated with purpose, the trace becomes a state closer to stability. With continued repetition, the state becomes a disposition, and the disposition enters shakila.

The single act matters but does not always disclose a disposition. A cowardly person may tell the truth once, and a truthful person may lie under pressure. Judging shakila requires attention to the repeated direction, to what emerges with relative ease, and to what a person returns to after a passing state.

Here comes a philosophical term we use once: the union of the knower with the known. It does not mean the mixing of two independent things or the union of the human being with God. It means that real knowledge becomes an actual perfection of the self, so that the self after knowing is no longer what it was before. Şadr al-Muta'allihīn expounded this meaning in his discussion of knowledge and the union of knower and known.^[40]

The practical language of this book is simpler: truth becomes settled, a quality becomes a configuration, and shakila takes form. What is meant is the transformation of one self by what it has known, chosen, and done — not the blending of two realities or the dissolution of the creature in the Creator.

When you know truthfulness and then practise it in situations of fear, something changes within you. At first a difficult decision is needed. With repetition the weight lessens, until lying itself becomes unfamiliar. No “quality” migrates into you from outside; a created disposition grows within the self, suited to your servanthood and limits.

As a disposition becomes settled, judgement shifts from an external watchman towards an inward scale. At first you may need reminders, punishment, or reward; later, truthfulness itself becomes beloved and lying repellent. A person never outgrows the revealed law or self-accounting, but obedience no longer remains a motion imposed wholly from outside: it comes closer to a disposition the self has chosen and cultivated.

The effects of the Most Beautiful Names appear in the human being according to created capacity: mercy, justice, knowledge, wisdom, truthfulness, and other perfections

loved by God may become settled dispositions. The tradition uses the term “taking on character” (takhalluq) for this meaning, provided that this taking on of character remains created and limited, with no likeness to God, no participation in his absolute attributes, and no independence in possessing them. God’s attributes do not pass into the servant, nor does the servant’s justice become identical with divine justice. What is realised is a created human perfection that manifests servanthood.

Small Details Build the Form

A small detail does not equal a final destiny. One danger of speaking about repetition is that it turns into scrupulous obsession. Do not put yourself on trial for every motion; watch the patterns: what keeps returning? What do you defend? And what do you refuse, and repair when it occurs?

It is wise to choose a “key act” that sets other actions in motion. Regular sleep may improve prayer and work; a gathering for learning may change the company you keep; removing one source of content may reduce comparison. Not every change requires ten separate battles.

Consistency is more truthful than short-lived intensity. A small action that preserves the orientation can build a path; a harsh campaign may exhaust the self and return it to where it began. Gradual progress does not compromise the end; it respects the regularity by which qualities become settled.

Shakila is not formed only through major decisions. A word you delay speaking, a glance you permit, a promise you keep, and a situation you evade are all threads. Do not live in terror of every lapse, but do not dismiss repetition: habit is an action once it has found a road of return.

Repetition can work in either direction: remembrance that restores orientation, or complaint that feeds resentment; charity that widens the heart, or comparison that increases envy; apology that weakens pride, or justification that makes pride settle more firmly. The question is not only, “What did I do?” but also, “Which road within me did I make easier?”

Environment enters this mechanism. Companionship, content, place, and time act as cues that summon some behaviours and weaken others. These cues may narrow the field of choice to varying degrees; in ordinary conditions they make certain roads easier to take. Research on habit shows that repeating an act in a stable context strengthens its association with the cues of that context.^[41] Caring for the environment is therefore part of caring for shakila.

Maintaining the Environment That Feeds the Shakila

The environment may be one person who reminds you of who you want to be. It may be a rule in the house: no mockery, or a time without screens, or a prayer that is kept. A righteous environment is not a perfect one, but it makes return possible, familiar, and easier.

Do not let this care for your environment turn into haughty isolation. The believer lives among people and serves them, but knows the limits of exposure and distinguishes mercy towards one who errs from surrendering the heart to companionship that undermines it. You may remain close in duty while maintaining distance in influence.

And you are responsible for the environment you help shape by your presence. If you are a leader, a father, or a teacher, people do not learn from your instructions alone; they learn from your response to error, from your way of using power, and from what you actually reward.

The Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) likened a righteous companion to the bearer of musk and an evil companion to one who works the bellows: from the first you may receive fragrance; from the second, harm or a foul smell. The effect of companionship may occur before a conscious decision has been framed.^[42]

Look at what repeats around you: who makes truth familiar? Who nourishes mockery, greed, or anxiety within you? What content awakens you, and what leaves you more scattered? Choosing the environment is not a withdrawal from the world; it is an ordering of what enters the self.

You may not be able to change the whole inherited environment or leave a binding responsibility. Then you build pockets of protection within it: time for remembrance, truthful companionship, limits on content, consultation, treatment, and an alternative act repeated until a new path forms within the self.

Tazkiya: The Condition of Continuing Transformation

Tazkiya is a path of purifying the self from veils and vices, cultivating its powers and perfections, and redirecting it towards truth and servanthood through God's guidance and aid. It is not enough to stop lying; truthfulness must be built. It is not enough to reduce envy; gratitude and prayer for another's good must be cultivated. Every instance of growth

through tazkiya is a praiseworthy formative intensification, but not every formative intensification is tazkiya. An ethical vacuum does not endure, and the opposing quality opens a new path within the self.

The further you advance, the more the form of the test changes. A person may leave an overt act of disobedience, only for conceit to enter through their obedience; or they may acquire knowledge and then love the superiority it gives them. Tazkiya does not make you doubt every good, but it keeps dependence and self-accounting present.

The Qur'an warns of knowledge unguarded by tazkiya in the account of the one to whom God gave his signs and who cast them off: 'Recite to them the account of the one to whom we gave our signs, but he cast them off; then Satan followed him, and he became one of those who deviated' (Q 7:175). Notice "cast them off". Unless knowledge becomes a configuration within the self, it remains an outward garment that can be discarded. Knowledge opens the possibility of ascent but cannot guard itself; it needs truthfulness, action, and dependence until it becomes a settled form.

The measure of this continuing care is not that you never change, but that you know the road of return. The living self may fall back, but remembrance, companionship, worship, and repentance can bring it back before regression becomes an orientation.

What has become settled still needs care. This is not because every virtue disappears at the first moment of heedlessness, but because the self is alive, the environment changes, and delusion may enter through the very door of success. Tazkiya

is not an initial cleansing that then ends; it is the continuing protection of orientation, the removal of what competes with it, and the cultivation of what accords with it.

Remembrance restores the centre, worship renews servanthood, self-accounting discloses deviation, repentance corrects, companionship guards, and knowledge reviews the map. These practices do not “maintain” some obscure union; they preserve the truth that has become settled and keep shakila from closing around its own illusion.

The Integrative Map: From Act to Existential Form

This book draws upon Ṣadr al-Muta’allihīn’s account of substantial motion to explain how change can reach the self’s mode of existence in depth, rather than treating the concept as a synonym for every instance of learning or habit. Its practical language distinguishes the terms: becoming is the continuous actual process through which the human being, over time, becomes what they are and will be; taking shape is the ordinary description of a habit, disposition, or shakila forming. Fitra is the origin and measure of creation; shakila is a relatively settled actual structure; a disposition is a settled quality within it; and orientation is the direction and value of movement.

You are neither a neutral self carrying qualities from outside nor a bundle of qualities without a self. You are one self whose form develops through the knowledge, loves, intentions, dispositions, and orientation that become settled within it. Qualities are therefore not carried like luggage; you go forth as what you have become.

But none of this happens independently of God. Ability, guidance, the opportunity to act, steadfastness, and the possibility of bearing fruit — all are from his giving. And from here the next chapter opens the door of divine aid: how can your act be real, and your need real, at the same time?

Chapter Conclusion: From Knowledge to Being

In this chapter we walked the road from act to shakila, from shakila to orientation, then to repentance and self-accounting, and to the mechanism by which knowledge settles into a configuration and disposition. The conclusion is not that the human being ‘unites with the truth’ in a misleading sense, but that truth settles in the self until truthfulness, justice, and mercy issue from it more readily.

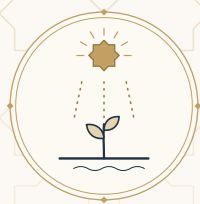
The meaning of “the immortal self” now becomes clear: the one human person whose single human self is the ground of personal identity and who continues after death, sustained by God and carrying the knowledge, loves, intentions, dispositions, and orientation that have taken shape within them — not the existential form alone. “Acquired” does not mean that the person chose every cause that contributed to what they became; praise and blame are governed by knowledge, intention, choice, and practical scope. The person carries what has taken shape within them into the hereafter, through God’s preservation and judgement.

This transformation does not occur through independent human power. God creates, guides, aids, and grants tawfiq; the human being responds, chooses, and acts. Through this interaction, the form the person carries takes shape. The act truly belongs to the person at the created human level, while ability, opportunity, guidance, steadfastness, and the possibility of producing an effect all come from God. This is why the final chapter opens the door to divine aid: help that precedes striving, accompanies it, and opens the way for it to bear fruit.



A Pause for Reflection

Before you close the chapter, choose an action that recurs in your day. Do not ask only whether it is good or bad. Ask: which road within the self does repetition make easier? Which disposition does it feed? Does it bring shakila closer to the orientation you have declared, or is it quietly building another form?



Chapter Eight —

Divine Aid

Prelude: You Strive While Being Carried

We closed the previous chapter with a question on which the whole book depends: if the self undergoes becoming through knowledge, choice, and action, and through what it was given and what befell it, does all of this occur by the human being's power alone?

The answer is no. Divine aid does not begin when your strength runs out, as though it were a hand that arrived only after you had finished your part. You were never independent to begin with: your existence, fitra, intellect, ability, the revelation that guides you, and the opportunity that appeared are all gifts from him.

And yet this giving has not stripped you of your act. You truly intend, choose, and use the available means; that is why your deeds are attributed to you and you bear responsibility for them. The act is truly yours at your own level, while ability, opportunity, steadfastness, and the possibility of an effect are all through God.

This is why the Fatiha joins two declarations: ‘You alone we worship, and you alone we ask for help’ (Q 1:5). “We worship” affirms action and responsibility; “we ask for help” affirms dependence and tawfiq. Reflecting on this conjunction, we may see that responsible action never stands independently of help. The servant needs the Lord’s aid throughout worship, not only when personal ability fails. The servant is neither passive, abandoning striving, nor self-sufficient, imagining that striving stands by itself. The human being is neither compelled in a way that erases agency nor independent in a way that severs action from the Lord.

Divine aid is a comprehensive term encompassing God’s guidance, help, strengthening, preparation of causes, and opening of the way for striving to bear fruit. It precedes human striving, accompanies it, and exceeds it, without replacing human action, bypassing the divinely established regularities, or guaranteeing the particular form of the result a person wants. It may be read through two interwoven aspects: revelatory aid, which guides, and providential aid, which assists, strengthens, and brings causes together.

Revelatory Aid: The Revelation That Guides

Revelation is a map from the Creator to the human being he created. God says: ‘Whenever guidance comes to you from me, whoever follows my guidance shall neither go astray nor be wretched’ (Q 20:123). The verse rules out both going astray and wretchedness for the one who follows guidance. He also says: ‘Through it God guides those who follow his pleasure to the ways of peace’ (Q 5:16). The book may bring that peace into view as freedom from being lost, not freedom from every pain: travellers may grieve, stumble, and suffer, yet still know

their orientation and the road of return. Guidance does not live your life for you, but it discloses the orientation and gives the intellect and heart a measure beyond the fluctuations of desire.

The presence of revelation does not remove the need for reading and reflection. You may carry a copy of the Qur'an while your governing conceptions remain unchanged if you never allow the text to correct them. Revelatory aid reaches you when you reflect, learn from people of knowledge, read verses within their context, and allow their meaning to judge your habits rather than merely adorn them.

And the Sunna translates the guidance into a human life: worship, relationships, judgement, mercy, patience. But it requires verification of the report and understanding of the context; we do not attribute to the Prophet or the Imams what has not been established, merely because it agrees with a beautiful idea.

Human interpretive effort in understanding the text remains human. So do not make one opinion equal to revelation, and do not use the diversity of interpretations as a pretext for setting aside the ruling. Ask about the evidence and the method; respect the standing of scholars while preserving the authority of the text.

When revelation guides you to an orientation, it does not cancel the complexity of a worldly decision. You may need medical, economic, or legal expertise. The governing reference fixes values and limits; specialists explain reality and the available means. A complete vision needs both.

The human problem is not a scarcity of roads but their abundance. Desire, environment, fear, and ambition speak through a crowd of competing voices, and the intellect can

construct an argument for each one. Without a map, a person is like someone walking in a dense forest: they see many paths without knowing which one leads to the destination and hear overlapping voices without knowing which speaks the truth. They therefore need a point of reference not born of the self's own fluctuations. When revelation is made the judge amid this crowd, the noise of the world does not disappear, but the noise within begins to quiet.

Desire may grow so strong that it becomes the final reference: 'Have you seen the one who takes his desire as his god?' (Q 45:23). It is not enough that a decision 'comes from within'; the inward life itself needs a light by which it can be examined. Otherwise, the intellect can build whatever arguments it wishes in defence of need, fear, and ambition.

Revelation answers the questions that give all other questions their meaning: who are you? Whom do you worship? What is the good? What are the limits of the means? And where are you going? It does not cancel the intellect; it guides it to what exceeds its experience, and requires of it reflection, examination, and review.

God says: 'Does he who created not know — he who is the Subtle, the All-Aware?' (Q 67:14). The One who created the human being knows best what sets the person right; but arguing from the verse does not turn the revealed law into a mechanical "instruction manual". The human being is a responsible self, and the revealed law is guidance, servanthood, and tazkiya — not an operating programme for a device.

The revealed law sets out the form of the act and its limits: what preserves rights, what prevents injustice, what joins worship to life. A righteous intention does not suffice without righteous work; and a person's feeling is not to be substituted for what God has legislated.

Revelatory aid is not confined to command and prohibition. It also includes narratives that widen vision, parables that bring meaning near, remembrance that restores the heart, supplication that teaches need, and promise and warning that disclose the road's end.

Worship: The Embodiment of Servanthood and the Tazkiya of the Human Being

Prayer divides the day into stations of return. You may not feel an upheaval in every prayer, but the regularity of standing prevents heedlessness from taking possession of the whole day. Repetition here is not a defect: the self undergoes becoming through what recurs, while habit and shakila take shape through what returns. That is why the call itself returns.

Fasting does not train you in deprivation for deprivation's sake. It teaches you that desire exists and is not a master, and that the body can wait in obedience to a meaning. Then it tests the truthfulness of the training in speech and character, not in hunger alone.

Almsgiving and charity do not merely reduce a number; they redefine ownership. What is in your hand is a trust, and the other person's right is not a favour from you. If wealth leaves the hand while pride remains, the worship needs deeper review — not abandonment.

Remembrance is not a substitute for work; it is the return of God's name and authority to the centre of awareness. You remember God, then return to the task in your hands, and your relation to it has changed: you perform it as a trust, not as a way of proving yourself.

Worship is not a technique designed to produce a psychological effect, and its value does not depend on how you feel afterwards. Ontological dependence is a universal reality of every creature. Servanthood is the conscious and chosen orientation by which God is acknowledged as the human being's Lord, highest point of reference, and end of striving. Worship embodies this servanthood in rites, acts of obedience, and lawful works directed towards God, with the obedience, love, submission, and remembrance they contain. It issues from the one self and is embodied through the body in legislated form and lawful action, bringing the whole human being into servanthood and, through repetition, leaving an effect within the self.

In prayer, the human being returns from scatteredness to the qibla and remembrance. In fasting, they learn that ability is not the same as permission and that appetite can be guided. In almsgiving, wealth moves out of the heart's centre; in remembrance, orientation is renewed amid the demands of life.

Nor are these effects mechanical. A person may perform the form while their share in its fruit diminishes; yet they do not dispense with the form in the name of the inward, and the inward cannot live long without an act to carry and renew it. Al-Ghazālī and al-Khomeinī linked the repetition of worship to the polishing of the heart, the renewal of remembrance, and the settling of the form of servanthood in the self.^[43]

Divine aid also reveals that you do not worship through your own strength alone or produce the formative effect within the self independently. You perform the act and ask God to give it life within you, accept it from you, and restore your orientation through it. Worship is one of the places where human striving meets divine help.

The Aid That Precedes Striving, Accompanies It, and Enables It to Bear Fruit

You may not see the preceding aid because it has become familiar: an ability to read, a person who taught you, a moment of safety that allowed you to think. Gratitude brings these prior gifts back into awareness and keeps you from attributing the whole story to yourself.

And the accompanying aid does not mean a constant sense of warmth. It may come as a demanding discipline, a word of criticism, or a result that discloses your error. Help is not always what suits your mood; it is what brings you nearer to the truth without stripping you of choice.

The fruit of the work, however, is not your possession. You may plant a meaning in a son or student and never see its fruit; you may labour on a project whose outward form ends while what it formed in you or in others remains. Surrender does not cancel the evaluation of results, but it frees you from claiming control over every effect.

Aid precedes your striving in the origin of creation, *fitra*, intellect, ability, revelation, being alerted, and the opportunity of choice. It accompanies striving through a steadied heart, clearer understanding, helpful companionship, an

obstacle averted, or a door of repentance that opens. Its effect appears in the acceptance of the work, the settling of its trace, and the increase of guidance.

This account is not a mechanism that guarantees the result you want. You may work and find that the project does not materialise; repent and find that some effects of the past remain; pray and find that what you asked for is delayed. Divine aid is not measured by outward success or by the ease of the road.

Tawfiq: The Joining of Causes While Choice Remains

Tawfiq may come through the convergence of small things: sufficient sleep, accurate information, a fitting time, and a ready heart. None looks miraculous on its own, but together they make possible an act that was not possible yesterday. This is what is meant by the joining of causes.

The averting of a cause may itself be tawfiq: a means that would have enabled a wrong course may fail. But we may not assert that every failure was a protection; it may have resulted from neglect. You examine the cause, repair the shortcoming, and then hope that God brings good out of what occurred.

When you see tawfiq, do not turn it into a sign of superiority over others. You do not know why the causes came together for you; make the opening an occasion for responsibility and gratitude, not grounds for conceit.

If you experience no easing, do not conclude at once that God has abandoned you. The right road may be arduous; you may need to change the means; or what is required may be a

review of the means or of the end itself. Discernment requires the revealed law, intellect, consultation, seeking God's guidance (istikhara), and humility.

Al-‘Allāma al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī defines tawfiq as the joining of causes in a way that leads the servant to righteous work, or the averting of some of what would help the servant towards disobedience.^[44] Tawfiq does not cancel your act; it prepares, within you and around you, what makes the good possible or brings it nearer.

Tawfiq may take the form of a clarifying insight, a heart that stands firm, a friend who counsels, an opportunity to learn, or a pause before a harmful decision. It may lie in the disclosure of a fault rather than the success of a project; in accepting treatment rather than the disappearance of illness; in repentance after a slip rather than a life without slipping.

Truthfulness and sincerity are not a contract obliging God to open the door you have chosen. They are among the causes of guidance, but tawfiq is grace and wisdom rather than a mechanical entitlement. Good may lie in work you continue or in a door from which you are turned away, and at the moment it occurs you may not know which.

Easing: Preparation for the Easier Way, Not the Removal of Hardship

The good may be eased by a change within you rather than outside you: apologising becomes easier than holding on to pride, patience easier than revenge, or seeking treatment easier than denial. This is a real easing, even if circumstances remain difficult.

Outward circumstances may also be eased through ordinary causes: a person who opens a door, a system that saves time, or a skill you learn. Do not divide the world into ‘spiritual’ and ‘material’; God’s preparation works through both, and ordinary causes are part of his giving.

What is easier is not always what you love now. Gradual learning is easier than ignorance in the end, even if it is harder at the time. Easing must therefore be read in the light of the easier way: the road that brings you nearer to the good, not the shortest road to desire.

God says: ‘We shall ease him towards the easier way’ (Q 92:7). Easing is that God prepares the person, or the road, for the easier way — not that every difficulty disappears. The mountain may remain, but the pass becomes clear; the pain may remain, but it does not sever the orientation.

We do not say that when the inward life clears, outward reality necessarily softens. Your heart may clear while injustice remains; you may be truthful while illness remains; you may choose well and still lose an opportunity. Easing may consist in strength to bear reality and act within it, not in reshaping the outward world according to your wish.

Nor does a heart present with God read a hidden message into every obstacle. Presence gives you a standard for action and humility before what you do not know, not knowledge of the unseen. You search for the cause, consult, seek God’s guidance through *istikhara*, then bear responsibility for your decision and learn from its result.

‘You Did Not Throw When You Threw’: A Real Act and an Effect beyond Ability

God says, of Badr: ‘You did not throw when you threw, but God threw’ (Q 8:17). Pause at how the verse joins the two sides: the Qur’an affirms for the Prophet the act of throwing in its direct performance, and attributes to God the particular effect that exceeded human ability in that event.

Do not turn the verse into a slogan that denies the effects of human causes. You truly act, and an ordinary effect may follow. Yet God grants the ability, establishes the causes, and sustains their effects; he may also grant your act a fruit beyond the reach of human strength.

Divine Accompaniment, Kindness, and the Limits of Interpreting Events

The attentive servant does not seek to turn every coincidence into a sign. Istikhara is not divination; a dream is not legislation; and a feeling of inner expansiveness is not, by itself, sufficient evidence. God has given you revelation, intellect, and causes; do not abandon what is clear in pursuit of an obscure indication.

Thinking well of God does not mean believing that the outcome you chose must occur. It means trusting that God does not wrong you and that the door of servanthood remains open in every outcome. You may grieve what you have lost and learn from it without thinking ill of God.

Special divine accompaniment does not prevent the believer from facing fear or loss. Nearness through servanthood describes the servant’s turning towards God; special divine accompaniment describes God’s care for the servant. It

is not a third dimension of nearness, an automatic result, or immunity from the regularities of this world. It means strengthening, guidance, and care according to wisdom. The prophets themselves fell ill, grieved, and suffered harm while God was with them.

The meaning of some events may remain unknown to the end. Maturity is the ability to live with that space without filling it with suspicion or unwarranted claims. You may say: I do not know why this happened, but I know what is required of me now.

General divine accompaniment describes God's relation to all creation through knowledge, encompassment, and sustaining power. Special divine accompaniment is the care, guidance, strengthening, and support God bestows upon his servants along the path of response and servanthood, according to wisdom and promise. A servant may experience its effect as serenity, clarity, or firmness; the absence of such a feeling does not mean the absence of God.

Divine kindness (*lutf*) brings the servant nearer to obedience and farther from disobedience without compulsion. It may appear as an opening, a withholding, an alert, or a person. But we do not assert that every closed door is a particular protection, or that every meeting is a message. We hope for divine kindness, give thanks for what has become clear, and remain silent about what we do not know.

The story of Moses and the righteous servant teaches that forms of wisdom may lie behind outward appearances without our grasping them fully. It does not grant us authority to interpret every event according to that pattern. Our duty is to judge by the truth and causes that have become apparent, and to leave to God what he has not disclosed.

When Available Causes Are Exhausted

A moment may come when no available means remains within your reach. Incapacity does not thereby become a virtue in itself, nor does it mean that you have been chosen for a special station. It returns you to a truth that was present from the beginning: every cause is limited, and the servant remains in need even while strong.

In the story of Moses and the sea, he says: ‘By no means! Surely my Lord is with me; he will guide me’ (Q 26:62). He neither denies the danger nor yet knows the form deliverance will take, but stands firm upon God’s promise. Then comes the command to act: ‘Strike the sea with your staff’ (Q 26:63). Notice the order: divine accompaniment, an appointed cause, and then an opening from God.

This is the balance: do not stop acting while an available means remains in your hand, and do not worship the means as though it owned the result. When you have exhausted what you can do, servanthood has not ended. Supplication, patience, the seeking of help, and acceptance of what lies beyond your ability all remain.

Chapter Conclusion: The Strength of Conscious Dependence

Conscious dependence does not weaken initiative; it purifies it. You work because work is a trust, not because you own the universe. You plan because making use of means is required, not because the plan is a decree guaranteed to unfold. You learn from failure without making yourself the god of the outcome.

Whoever knows that they are carried also knows that others are carried in ways they do not see. They become less quick to judge others, more grateful to those who have helped them, and understand that their success is a network of blessings, helping hands, and causes — not a purely individual story.

Revelatory aid shows the way; providential aid prepares, assists, and strengthens. Both are expressions of one divine kindness, which neither coerces the human being nor leaves the person independent.

The greatest insight the servant reaches here is not an illusion of absolute power, but the realisation of being carried. The servant strives with everything they have been granted, knowing that ability itself is a gift and that the fruit of striving is not a private possession. Conceit falls away on one side, and passivity on the other.

God says: ‘You do not will unless God wills’ (Q 76:30). Your willing is real, but it subsists through his will and is not independent of it. This does not erase your selfhood; it places it in its proper position: the selfhood of a responsible servant who reaches perfection through a truthful awareness of dependence and a response of servanthood.

With this, the account of becoming is complete: fitra and guidance; choice and action; environment and friction; a shakila that takes shape; repentance that corrects; and divine aid that precedes striving, accompanies it, exceeds it, and opens the way for it to bear fruit. Nothing remains but to gather these threads in the station we have called deep-rooted truthfulness (siddiqiyya).



A Pause for Reflection

Call to mind a situation in which you took the available means but did not control the outcome. Where did your duty actually end? What can you do now without either the illusion of control or passive resignation? And how does your action change when you know that dependence upon God does not cancel responsibility, but frees it from conceit and fear?



Conclusion —

Deep-Rooted Truthfulness (Siddiqiyya): The Graduated Summit of the Path of Inner Truthfulness

When the Threads Come Together

When you reach the end of this journey, the change in you is not merely that you have added one more piece of knowledge to what you know, or one skill to what you can do. The change is deeper: the orientation grows clear, and the aspects of the self draw nearer to one another, as scattered threads of light gather into a single beam. This gathering is what we seek in this conclusion, and in the language of this book it has a name: your share of siddiqiyya.

From Inner Truthfulness to Deep-Rooted Truthfulness (Siddiqiyya)

The summit of Inner Truthfulness is not that you know more, possess a stronger will, or experience a fleeting emotional state. It is that you attain a degree of siddiqiyya in which the aspects of the self come into truthful accord under truth and servanthood. The gaps once adopted between what you know, what settles in the heart, and what you intend, say, and do begin to recede. Siddiqiyya remains graduated: it does not exhaust every human station, and growth in truthfulness, knowledge, and servanthood has no final limit.

Looking back over the road you have travelled, you can see that the chapters were not separate stations left behind one after another, but threads woven towards a single point. The path began with your station and trust, then with this world as a second womb in which the self undergoes becoming. You saw that worship is God's right and the embodiment of servanthood, and that its underlying wisdom and effects include the tazkiya of the self. You also saw that you are one self, read through the bodily dimension, heart, intellect, and spirit, moving within regularities, causes, environments, and opposites.

Friction then disclosed what lay in the self; the will appeared as the place of responsibility; Inner Truthfulness as a course of truthful accord among the aspects under truth and fitra, with narrowing gaps as one of its mechanisms; the shakila as the form of what has settled; repentance as a correction of movement; and divine aid as the source that precedes striving, accompanies it, and opens the way for it to bear fruit.

Siddiqiyya is therefore not an additional chapter appended to the journey, but the gathering of its threads in one human being: fitra becomes clear, the orientation is directed towards God, the heart does not adopt the opposite of what it has known, the intellect does not become a stratagem, and the bodily dimension translates servanthood into life.

Your Acquired Existential Form

This form is not a frozen image sealed years before death. As long as you live, knowledge can widen, repentance can restore the orientation, and a contrary act can weaken an old disposition. Firmness does not mean closure, but that the predominant direction has become clear.

Nor do you know your whole form. You may see in yourself a virtue the situation does not confirm, or despise a small deed that carries weight with God. So you remain between hope and fear, ask God for a good ending, and do not make self-analysis a substitute for his judgement.

You are not a list of qualities, nor a neutral self standing outside them. You are one self, individuated by existence; what becomes settled within it — wisdom, knowledge, will, love, certainty, and tranquillity — becomes its acquired existential form.

Not every passing quality is you, and not everything you were born with is a final verdict upon you. But what you know, will, and repeat until it becomes a disposition does not remain outside the self. You do not carry your qualities with you as you carry your luggage; you go forth as what you have become.

Pause over this distinction, for the whole conclusion turns upon it. Knowledge, will, and strength may be partial existential perfections, but they do not become complete virtues or nearness to God unless the response is oriented towards truth. Knowledge needs truth, the will needs servanthood, strength needs justice, and certainty needs insight; otherwise ability may become an even more deeply deviant shakila.

The Tranquil Self: The Serenity of Orientation

Tranquillity is not an outward calm imposed by circumstances, nor the absence of pain. It is the serenity of orientation: your heart knows to whom it returns, so storms do not wrench it from its anchorage. In the language of this book, it is a graduated formative station of the heart arising from settled knowledge of God and remembrance of him, servanthood to him, and the self's firm grounding in God as its ultimate point of reference — an original fruit and a real manifestation of nearness. The truthful accord of the aspects and the self's integration contribute to its increase and firmness, but are not its sole cause. Fear and grief may remain present without wrenching the orientation from the heart. Consider the tenderness of the address to this self: 'O tranquil self, return to your Lord, well pleased and well pleasing' (Q 89:27-28).

Tranquillity reaches high degrees along the path of truthfulness and siddiqiyya, and continues to grow as the self's reference to God becomes more settled. The self may grieve a loss, fear a danger, seek treatment, and resist an injustice; but the feelings do not sever its bond with God or turn pain into a new lord.

Contentment is the heart's stillness towards God and the absence of resentment against him in what he has decreed and measured — without love of pain for its own sake, acceptance of injustice, or abandonment of treatment and repair within one's practical scope. You use the available means, hate the harm, pray for its removal, and then do not turn what has passed beyond your ability into a permanent quarrel with God.

The Strength Born of Unity

At the summit of the journey appears the monotheistic meaning that guards your selfhood from the two extremes of erasure and independence: you subsist through God, dependent on him in the origin of your existence, your continuance, and your effects; and yet you remain a created, responsible self that knows, chooses, works, and meets God with what it has become.

As you continue along the path of Inner Truthfulness through guidance, tazkiya, and divine aid, conduct is not the only thing that changes. The aspects of the self come into greater truthful accord and integration; dispersion and conflict diminish; tranquillity and firmness increase; and your share of siddiqiyya becomes more deeply settled. Strength and contentment appear, and selfhood reaches its human perfection in servanthood to God. In Şadrian language, this integration may be described as an increase in existential simplicity. That remains a secondary philosophical description; the truthful accord of the aspects and the integration of the self are the more immediate expressions used in this book. ^[45]

From this integration springs greater inner strength within the human being's limits and givens, because less of their energy is wasted in gaps and contradiction. Notice that it is not a strength of self-sufficiency, but of conscious dependence, drawing its firmness and aid from God; not separation from the world, but a greater capacity to enter it with truth, firmness, and mercy.

The Heart's Presence with God

The sign of the heart's presence with God is not an abundance of spiritual vocabulary, but how that presence affects your response to truth. Does God's knowledge of you keep you from wronging someone who cannot defend themselves? Does it prompt you to apologise? Does it make well-crafted work an act of worship even when no one sees you?

Your heart may be present in a moment of fatigue without sweetness because you chose to fulfil the trust; and you may be heedless in a moment of rapture if absorption in your own state distracts you from God. This presence is a relation and an orientation, not a mood measured by the intensity of the experience.

As truthfulness becomes settled, the heart's presence with God deepens amid ordinary life. The servant reads God's words, 'We are nearer to him than his jugular vein' (Q50:16), as a reminder of God's knowledge, sustaining power, and encompassing awareness, from which nothing inward is hidden. This nearness is constant; what waxes and wanes is the servant's awareness and response. "The Presence" (al-ḥaḍra) is a literary expression for the heart's presence, not an independent station or spatial nearness.

The Presence is not a place, an indwelling or union, a permanent unveiling, or an unbroken intensity of feeling. It means keeping before you your servanthood and God's knowledge of you, so that this awareness accompanies your intention, word, and act. Your presence may strengthen and weaken; you may grow heedless and then return.

This presence is realised in the marketplace, at home, at work, in relationships, and under trial. You enter the world with a heart that knows for whom it works, by what scale it chooses, and to whom it returns. You neither withdraw from causes nor worship outcomes. You keep before you the station of ihsan: to worship God as though you see him; if you do not see him, surely he sees you.^[46]

Nor does the Presence give you a hidden interpretation of every event. You seek wisdom without claiming knowledge of the unseen; you maintain a good opinion of God without attributing to him a message no evidence has established; and you return to the truth whenever a gap widens within you or your orientation leans away from it.

The Return to God

God says: 'Surely to your Lord is the return' (Q 96:8). The final return to God is the reality of the journey; repentance in this world, however, is a chosen return from heedlessness to remembrance, from division to truthfulness, and from servitude to image and outcome to servanthood to God. Not everyone travelling towards the encounter is repentant. Repentance becomes truthful through abandoning deviation and making repair within practical scope. When the

orientation becomes clear, you see this world as a passage, time as a field of becoming, and death as a transition rather than a final wall.

You do not return to “yourself” as an end parallel to God; you return to God, renewing fidelity to what the covenant of your *fitra* requires. You do not recover a hidden, already complete self, but purify the same self that carries your history. Every truthful repentance renews the direction, and every righteous act contributes to making it firm. What settles within you enters the form you carry, while you remain the same person, sustained by God.

When you stumble, you need not begin from nothing: the door of repentance prevents the past from becoming your destiny. When you weaken, you need not claim strength: dependence itself is a door of aid. When you do not understand, you need not invent an interpretation: it is enough to act on the truth that has become clear to you and leave to God what is hidden.

The path is eased by the fact that the One to whom you return is more merciful to you than you are to yourself. God says: ‘Whoever comes with a good deed shall have ten like it; and whoever comes with an evil deed shall be recompensed only with its like’ (Q 6:160). He also says: ‘Say: O my servants who have transgressed against themselves, do not despair of God’s mercy’ (Q 39:53). For those who repent, believe, and act righteously, he opens a still wider door: ‘for them, God will replace their evil deeds with good ones’ (Q 25:70). Sin does not become good in itself, but divine mercy prevents the fall from having the last word. Return is not standing before a cold reckoning of slips; it is turning towards a generosity that

receives those who return with more than they deserve. Whoever knows that the journey ends with this generosity finds the road easier to travel.

The Journey's End: A Return to the First Question

One question remains: the question with which we opened this book. If this is your station in the book of God, why do you feel so small in your day? Perhaps you now possess more of the answer than you did before. The smallness was not your station but an estrangement from it; not your reality but a gap between what you were created for and how you live. As the aspects of the self come into truthful accord under the truth, that gap narrows, and the same ordinary day — with its coffee, meetings, and traffic — becomes a field in which a servant who knows where they are going undergoes becoming.

Do not finish reading with the question, ‘Am I complete?’ Ask a more truthful question: has my orientation become clear? What can I do today to give this orientation expression? This summit is not attained through a claim, but through a road of truthfulness, return, work, and aid.

The journey therefore ends not with a promise that life will always soften or that feelings will fall silent, but with a compass: recognise the human form taking shape within you, direct your orientation towards God, and participate truthfully — within what God has enabled — in shaping shakila and acquired existential form. God creates, guides, aids, and grants tawfiq; you respond, choose, and act. Through this interaction, the form you carry takes shape. You remain the

same person, sustained by the God who created you, preserves you, and opened the road. You carry what has taken shape within you.

‘Surely the God-conscious will be amid gardens and rivers, in a seat of truthfulness, in the presence of an All-Powerful Sovereign’ (Q 54:54–55).

Pause at the final name the book of God gives this settled place: a seat of truthfulness. Whoever was truthful on the road to God is fittingly met by a ‘seat of truthfulness’ as an ending worthy of that road. And ‘in the presence of an All-Powerful Sovereign’: no independence belongs to the self in its beginning, its continuance, or its end. Its perfection is to be a truthful servant, present in heart and tranquil in orientation, returning to God with what it has become.

Index of the Book's Concepts

This index is not an independent glossary. It offers concise formulations of the book's central concepts for the reader; these do not replace the governing definitions in the reference glossary appended to Human Becoming in the Islamic Worldview.

The Four Dimensions — interwoven aspects through which the presence and activity of the one self are read in this worldly life: the bodily dimension, heart, intellect, and spirit. They are windows of analysis, not parts or adjacent selves. See Chapter [Three](#).

Body and Bodily Dimension — the body is the human being's bodily rank and the field of sensory reception and action; the bodily dimension is its functional name within the Four Dimensions Model when we consider embodied presence and action. See Chapter [Three](#).

The Body as a Trust — the principle that the human body is part of worldly existence and the field of action, entrusted by God to the person; it must therefore be preserved and cared for, its capacities cultivated, and its use directed towards truth, without being deified or having its needs neglected. See Chapter [Three](#).

Formative Environment — the network of circumstances, relationships, messages, models, incentives, opportunities, and obstacles that contribute over time to the becoming of the whole human being without making the person's course inevitable or abolishing agency. See Chapter [Five](#).

Tazkiya and Growth through Tazkiya — tazkiya purifies the self from veils and vices, cultivates its powers and perfections, and redirects it towards truth and servanthood through God's guidance and aid; growth through tazkiya is the growth of those powers within a positive response to truth. See Chapters [Two](#) and [Seven](#).

Actualised Perfection — knowledge, understanding, will, settled dispositions, and powers that have become actual qualities within the self. It is wider than complete moral virtue, because orientation determines ethical value. See Chapter [Four](#).

Deep Transformation — a change within becoming that reaches the self's governing structure and alters what the human being becomes, rather than outward conduct alone. It may move towards perfection or deficiency. See Chapter [Seven](#).

Embodiment of Deeds and Otherworldly Recompense — knowledge, intentions, deeds, and dispositions enter the self's becoming, and their realities and effects appear in the hereafter through God's disclosure and judgement. This does not make recompense an independent mechanism or license judgement upon people's destinies. See Chapter [Seven](#).

Becoming — the continuous actual process through which the human being, over time, becomes what they are and will be.

“Taking shape” is used as an ordinary description of the formation of a habit, disposition, or shakila.

See Chapters [One](#) and [Seven](#).

Repentance — the self’s return to God and truth after a deviation becomes clear, through acknowledgement, regret, cessation, resolve, and repair according to the revealed law and practical scope. Repentance may be truthful before the effects of habit or pain disappear; its door does not close when deviation has become settled. See Chapter [Seven](#), “[Repentance and Self-Accounting: Correcting the Motion and Renewing the Orientation](#)”.

Uprightness — firmness of orientation upon truth and servanthood, with gradual growth, repentance, and correction. It does not require a habit to be perfected or hardship to disappear before setting out. See Chapter [Seven](#), “[Repentance and Self-Accounting: Correcting the Motion and Renewing the Orientation](#)”.

Substantial Motion — a Šadrian philosophical position from which the theory draws as a supporting explanation of how change can reach the self’s mode of existence; accepting it is not a condition for accepting becoming, tazkiya, or repentance. See Chapter [Seven](#).

The Presence (al-ḥaḍra) — a secondary literary and mystical expression for the heart's presence with God and the servant's awareness of subsisting through him and living under his gaze while acting in the world. It does not indicate a place, indwelling, or an independent station within the model. See [the Conclusion](#).

The Second Womb — an interpretive and explanatory metaphor presenting this world as a stage in which the human being undergoes becoming in preparation for what follows death. The point of resemblance is becoming within a limited stage; here the human being is a choosing agent, not a passive embryo. See Chapter [One](#).

The Immortal Self — the one human person whose single self is the ground of personal identity and who continues after death, sustained by God and carrying what has taken shape within them. The immortal self is neither the existential form alone nor a self independent of God. See [the project page](#) and Chapter [Seven](#).

Shakila — a relatively settled inward psychological and ethical structure that makes some ways of perceiving, responding, and acting more likely without compelling the person. A disposition is a settled quality within it. See Chapter [Seven](#).

Inner Truthfulness — a graduated formative path in which the four aspects of the self come into truthful accord with truth as their point of reference and in accordance with what fitra calls for. Confronting the self, self-accounting, exposing gaps, repentance, and repair are among its mechanisms.

See Chapter [Six](#), “[Inner Truthfulness: The Truthful Accord of the Self’s Aspects under Truth and Fitra](#)”, for its connection with fidelity to the covenant; and “[The Road of Truthfulness: Disclosure, Then Decision, Then Repetition](#)”, for the distinction between being alerted and discerning the truth.

Deep-Rooted Truthfulness (Siddiqiyya) — the graduated summit of Inner Truthfulness, in which the truthful accord and ordering of the self’s aspects under truth and servanthood reach their highest degrees. It does not imply infallibility in anyone other than the infallible or license the classification of persons. See Chapter [Six](#) and [the Conclusion](#).

Acquired Existential Form — the cumulative whole of the knowledge, loves, intentions, powers, dispositions, and orientation that have become actual within the self. It is distinct from the person who continues while carrying it, and does not imply that the person chose all its causes. See Chapters [Four](#) and [Seven](#).

Worship — the intentional and practical embodiment of servanthood in rites, acts of obedience, and lawful works directed to God. See Chapters [Two](#) and [Eight](#).

Embodied Worship — worship that issues from the one self through intention and faith and is embodied through the body in legislated form and lawful action. No inward meaning replaces obedience, and no outward form alone proves the perfection of the inward life. See Chapter [Eight](#).

Anxious Restlessness, Fretfulness, and Withholding — the book reads the verses of Sūrat al-Ma‘ārij in terms of the powers’ susceptibility to misdirection and their capacity for discipline, with the exception of those who pray as described through worship, giving, trustworthiness, and fidelity to pledges. Not every fear or grief is counted as deviation. See Chapter [Two](#), “[The Second Veil: When Worship Is Performed but Not Lived](#)”.

Servanthood — the conscious, chosen orientation in which God is the human being’s Lord, highest point of reference, and the end of striving. See Chapters [Two](#) and [Eight](#).

Instrumental Expansion — a receptivity, resource, or circumstance that widens the field of action — such as wealth, office, opportunity, or initial ability — without becoming an actual quality within the self. See Chapter [Four](#).

Ontological Dependence — a universal reality of every creature in the origin of its existence, continuance, and effects. Merit lies in the truthfulness of the human being’s awareness of it and their response in servanthood, not in the bare fact of dependence. See Chapter [Eight](#).

Receptivity, Preparedness, Actual Capacity, and Practical Scope — receptivity is the range of structural possibility; preparedness is the degree of preparation for realisation; actual capacity is what the person can do or refrain from doing now; and practical scope is what grounds responsibility in actual circumstances, including the means the person is able to put in place. See Chapter [Four](#).

Nearness to God / Nearness through Servanthood — a non-spatial movement in which the perfections realised in the self interact with its response to truth and servanthood. It is not measured by a single outward sign and cannot be used to judge inward states. See Chapters [One](#) and [Eight](#).

Kadh — the existential movement inseparable from human life: through time, every human being moves towards the encounter with God and their final destiny before him. It is not identical with voluntary striving, hardship, or positive growth; what the person becomes is determined by the orientation of the response within this movement. See Chapters [One](#) and [Five](#).

Fitra — a specific mode of human creation containing an immediate, general awareness of truth, an original love of perfection, and an orientation towards servanthood. It is not detailed acquired knowledge and needs revelation, the intellect, and tazkiya. See Chapter [Three](#).

The Covenant and the Covenant of Fitra — the covenant is a calling to bear witness to God’s lordship, an acknowledgement, and a binding proof. In the project’s reading, fitra and the covenant describe one monotheistic reality from two aspects: the original creation, and the witnessing and binding proof. This neither makes the terms synonymous nor settles how the covenant took place. See Chapter [Three](#), “[Spirit and Fitra](#)”.

The Divine Charge and the Straight Path — the charge to worship God and turn away from Satan is read as the practical requirement of acknowledging God’s lordship; worship of him is the path of that fidelity. The distinct contexts of the charge or pledge are preserved. See Chapter [Three](#), “[Spirit and Fitra](#)”.

Self-Accounting — a truthful, deliberate examination through which the self discloses its position and course and recognises where gratitude is due, where it has fallen short, and where repair or repentance is needed. See Chapter [Seven](#).

Divine Aid — God’s guidance, help, strengthening, preparation of causes, and opening of the way for striving to bear fruit. Divine aid precedes striving, accompanies it, and exceeds it without cancelling action or guaranteeing the result the person wants. See Chapter [Eight](#).

General and Special Divine Accompaniment — general divine accompaniment is God’s knowledge, encompassment, and sustaining of all creation; special divine accompaniment is his care, guidance, and strengthening of servants along the path of servanthood. It is not a third dimension of nearness or a guarantee of worldly success. See Chapter [Eight](#).

The Self (nafs) — the one personal human reality: the bearer of perception, purpose, choice, and action, within which knowledge, loves, intentions, habits, and dispositions interact. It is the subject of becoming and bears the effects of what befalls it and what issues from it. See Chapter [Three](#).

Unity of the Self and Multiplicity of Its Aspects of Action — the human being is one personal self acting through interwoven aspects, not a collection of independent selves or parts. See Chapter [Three](#).

Harmony of the Aspects and Its Effects — the truthful accord and integration of the self’s aspects under truth and fitra. It reduces dispersion, conflict, and veils; increases tranquillity, firmness, and stability; and widens the self’s capacity to savour the good of existence. This is one aspect of happiness. In the Şadrian account, “existential simplicity” remains a secondary philosophical description. See Chapters [Three](#) and [Six](#).

Orientation — the predominant direction the self’s movement takes through time towards what it adopts as its point of reference and end, as disclosed by intentions, choices, deeds, and its stance towards review and repentance — not merely the end it declares. See Chapter [Seven](#).

The Will, Its Strength, and Its Truthfulness — the will is the self’s decisive settling upon a possible act and turning towards its performance within practical scope. Its strength is the degree of steadfastness; its truthfulness is the direction of that steadfastness. Will is a partial perfection, not a complete virtue in itself. See Chapter [Six](#).

Tranquillity — a graduated formative station of the heart arising from settled knowledge of God and remembrance of him, servanthood to him, and the self’s firm grounding in God as its ultimate point of reference. It is an original fruit and manifestation of nearness, not mere emotional calm or a measure for ranking people. See Chapter [Two](#) and [the Conclusion](#); also Chapter [One](#) on straitness, and Chapter [Five](#) on the limits of interpreting pain.

A Straited Life — one explanation is a constriction connected with turning away and the tyranny of attachment, which may occur amid abundant possessions. The verse is not restricted to this reading, nor does it explain every instance of suffering. See Chapter [One](#), “[Why Is This World Not Enough for You?](#)”

The Nearer Punishment — explained in al-Mizān and al-Amthal as punishment in this world while the opportunity for return remains. The book proposes including some constriction of turning away among its instances by way of an exegetical synthesis, not a conclusive identification or a diagnosis. See Chapter [Five](#), “[Pain May Open a Door, but Does Not Guarantee Growth](#)”.

Contentment (riḍā) — the heart’s stillness towards God and the absence of resentment against him, without love of pain, acceptance of injustice, or abandonment of treatment and repair. See [the Conclusion](#).

Notes and Sources

[1] On the meaning of vicegerency and the attribution of the spirit: vicegerency is an honour and a trust upon the earth within servanthood. Q 2:30 alone does not establish the superiority of every human being over all angels and creatures. The attribution of the spirit to God expresses honour and possession in relation to a created spirit; it does not imply a division of the divine essence or an indwelling. See Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, on Q 2:30, Q 15:29, and Q 45:13.

[2] Al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, on Q 2:30, Q 15:29, and Q 45:13.

[3] E. F. Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered* (London: Blond & Briggs, 1973).

Cited for its critique of reducing the human being and nature to the logic of production and consumption.

[4] National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), “Our Milky Way Galaxy: How Big is Space?”, 2 April 2019; “What is the Universe?”, updated 29 October 2024; “How Big is Space? We Asked a NASA Expert: Episode 61”, 21 May 2025; and NASA Hubble Mission Team, “Hubble Reveals Observable Universe Contains 10 Times More Galaxies Than Previously Thought”, 13 October 2016.

For the estimate of roughly two trillion galaxies after accounting for faint galaxies not directly observed:

Christopher J. Conselice, Aaron Wilkinson, Kenneth Duncan, and Alice Mortlock, “The Evolution of Galaxy Number Density at $z < 8$ and Its Implications”, *The Astrophysical Journal* 830, no. 2 (2016), art. 83, DOI: 10.3847/0004-637X/830/2/83.

The figures in the main text are approximate scientific estimates. The estimate of two trillion galaxies belongs to the study's model, not a final agreed census; science has no reliable estimate of the size of the whole universe.

- [5] Nahj al-Balāgha, Sermon 203: “This world is a place of passage and the hereafter a place of abiding; so take from your passage for your abode.” The meaning is used in the main text to indicate that this world is a place of passage and work, not a place of final residence.

- [6] The straitness of turning away: Al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān, vol. 14, on Q 20:123–127 and the associated discussion of transmitted reports; Makārim al-Shīrāzī et al., al-Amthal fī Tafsīr Kitāb Allāh al-Munzal, on the same verses, especially the explanation of a straitened life and the effects of turning away. These passages are used for their explanation of straitness of life connected with attachment, not to confine the interpretations to this reading or extend it to every pain.

- [7] Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Book of the Merits, chapter on the signs of prophethood in Islam, ḥadīth no. 3612, from Khabbāb ibn al-Aratt. The account is used to show that the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) steadied the believers' orientation within severe hardship without making pain something sought for its own sake.

- [8] The verses of al-Ma'ārij and constancy: Al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, al-Mizān, vol. 20, on Q 70:19–35; Makārim al-Shīrāzī et al., al-Amthal, on the same verses. The supporting points are the goodness of the powers in their origin and their need for discipline; the exception for those who pray, whose qualities are considered together; and the effect of constancy. Analysing that effect as a contribution to the formation of the shakila is the book's own formulation, not wording quoted from the verses or a description of an inevitable psychological mechanism.

- [9] Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, the Book of the Mysteries of the Prayer; and Rūḥollāh al-Khomeinī, *Ādāb al-Ṣalāt*, on presence of heart and the effect of repeated worship in establishing the reality of servanthood.
- [10] Nahj al-Balāgha, Letter 45, from the letter of the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (peace be upon him), to ‘Uthmān ibn Ḥunayf: “Help me with scrupulousness, exertion, restraint, and uprightness.” The meaning is used to show that emulation is not literal imitation of a manner of living.
- [11] Ṣadr al-Muta’ allihīn al-Shīrāzī, al-Ḥikma al-Muta’ āliya fī al-Asfār al- ‘Aqliyya al-Arba’ a, 9:236, on the “fitra of the spirit” and the “fitra of the luminous spirit”. The passage is used to establish the origin of fitra and its attraction to perfection, not to attribute the project’s modern formulation verbatim to Ṣadr al-Muta’ allihīn.
- [12] Rūḥollāh al-Khomeinī, al-Arba’ ūn Ḥadīthan, commentary on the eleventh ḥadīth, on fitra as an original mode inherent in creation and on the love and seeking of absolute perfection. The expression “the immediate, general ground” (al-aṣl al-ḥuḍūrī al-ijmālī), rendered in the main text as “immediate, general awareness”, is an analytical formulation of the project that distinguishes this ground from detailed acquired knowledge.
- [13] The covenant of fitra and the divine charge: Nahj al-Balāgha, Sermon 1, the passage on the sending of the prophets and calling for fulfilment of the covenant of fitra; al-Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, Book of Faith and Unbelief, chapter “The Creation of Humankind upon the Fitra of Monotheism” (Fiṭrat al-khalq ‘alā al-tawḥīd), ḥadīth 2, connecting fitra with the taking of the covenant upon monotheism. See also al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī, al-Mizān, vol. 8, on Q 7:172–174, and vol. 17, on Q 36:60–62. These passages support bringing together fitra, the covenant, and what the divine charge requires, while preserving differences of context and making no claim that

the terms are synonymous or that the manner of witnessing has been settled. Their function here is to support the meaning; this reference includes no new verification of chains of transmission.

- [14] Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 15:317, on the Qur'anic heart — to which perception, feeling, and will are attributed — as the human self considered from this aspect.
- [15] Diego Candia-Rivera, Tahnée Engelen, Mariana Babo-Rebelo, and Paula C. Salamone, “Interoception, Network Physiology and the Emergence of Bodily Self-Awareness”, *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews* 165 (2024), 105864, DOI: 10.1016/j.neubiorev.2024.105864; Mallory J. Feldman, Eliza Bliss-Moreau, and Kristen A. Lindquist, “The Neurobiology of Interoception and Affect”, *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 28, no. 7 (2024): 643–661, DOI: 10.1016/j.tics.2024.01.009.
- [16] Ṣadr al-Muta'allihīn, *al-Asfār*, 3:17 ff., and the discussions of the self in vols 8 and 9, on substantial motion and dispositions becoming forms of the self; vol. 9 on the embodiment of deeds and resurrection. See also al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *al-Mizān*, 1:208 and 2:436. Substantial motion is used as a supporting philosophical explanation, and the embodiment of deeds as a traditional ground for the appearance of the realities of deeds by God's disclosure and judgement — not as a mechanism independent of him.
- [17] Al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *al-Mizān*, in the discussions of causality and the unity of divine agency, especially the commentary on Q 2:21–25 and Q 2:255; used to establish the efficacy of causes in their ranks together with their dependence upon God.
- [18] Ṣadr al-Muta'allihīn, *al-Asfār*, 3:17 ff., and the discussions of the self in vols 8 and 9; see also al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *al-Mizān*, 1:208 and 2:436.
- [19] Ṣadr al-Muta'allihīn, *al-Asfār*, 7:58–64, on the analysis of evil and pain and the distinction between privation and real felt harm.

- [20] Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāz al-Qurʿān*, entry k-b-d; and al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qurʿān*, vol. 20, on Q 90:4, on the meaning of the human being's creation in toil and struggle with the affairs of life. The lexical shades are used in the main text to make the meaning more accessible, without forcing the verse to bear every use of the root at once.
- [21] Al-Sayyid Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf fī Qatlā al-Ṭufūf*, 1:94, relates Lady Zaynab's (peace be upon her) appearance before ʿUbayd Allāh ibn Ziyād and her words, "I saw nothing but beauty." The report is used as a literary and historical witness to firmness of orientation and fidelity to truth — not to suggest that pain is beautiful in itself, nor to require every afflicted person to attain the same station.
- [22] Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn*, the Book of the Manners of Intimacy, Brotherhood, and Companionship; see also:
- Rachel I. McDonald and Christian S. Crandall, "Social Norms and Social Influence", *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences* 3 (2015): 147–151, DOI: 10.1016/j.cobeha.2015.04.006.
- Brett Laursen and René Veenstra, "Toward Understanding the Functions of Peer Influence: A Summary and Synthesis of Recent Empirical Research", *Journal of Research on Adolescence* 31, no. 4 (2021): 889–907, DOI: 10.1111/jora.12606.
- [23] International Association for the Study of Pain, "IASP Announces Revised Definition of Pain", 16 July 2020; Srinivasa N. Raja et al., "The Revised International Association for the Study of Pain Definition of Pain: Concepts, Challenges, and Compromises", *PAIN* 161, no. 9 (2020): 1976–1982, DOI: 10.1097/j.pain.0000000000001939; Patricia Frazier et al., "Does Self-Reported Posttraumatic Growth Reflect Genuine Positive Change?", *Psychological Science* 20, no. 7 (2009): 912–919, DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9280.2009.02381.x; Charlotte Henson, Didier Truchot, and

Amy Canevello, “Factors that Hinder Post-Traumatic Growth: A Systematic Review”, *L’Encéphale* 48, no. 5 (2022): 560–562, DOI: 10.1016/j.encep.2022.02.001.

- [24]** Patricia Frazier et al., “Does Self-Reported Posttraumatic Growth Reflect Genuine Positive Change?”, *Psychological Science* 20, no. 7 (2009): 912–919, DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9280.2009.02381.x; Charlotte Henson, Didier Truchot, and Amy Canevello, “Factors that Hinder Post-Traumatic Growth: A Systematic Review”, *L’Encéphale* 48, no. 5 (2022): 560–562, DOI: 10.1016/j.encep.2022.02.001.

These works are used to criticise the assumption of automatic growth after trauma and to distinguish the feeling of growth from sustained objective change.

- [25]** The nearer punishment and the limits of the exegetical synthesis: *Al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī*, *al-Mizān*, vol. 16, on Q 32:21 within Q 32:15–30, and on Q 30:41 and Q 33:24; Makārim al-Shirāzī et al., *al-Amthal*, on Q 32:21–22. Read these together with the meaning of the straitness of turning away in Q 20:123–127 and the explanation of torment through attachments in *al-Mizān*, vol. 9, on Q 9:55. A shared reference to punishment in this world is not enough to establish that the instances are identical; torment through attachments may accompany respite and a gradual drawing towards ruin. Including some constriction of turning away under the “nearer punishment” therefore remains a proposed exegetical synthesis, not an explicit identification of that instance in the two passages relied upon from *al-Mizān* and *al-Amthal* on *Sūrat al-Sajda*, nor a rule for diagnosing the suffering of individuals.

- [26]** Murtaḍā Muṭahharī, *al-‘Adl al-Ilāhī* (Divine Justice), the discussions of Satan and the benefits of evil and hardships, on the possibility that relative evil may become a field in which receptivities are realised in action while the evildoer’s intention and act remain blameworthy.

- [27] World Health Organization, “How do vaccines work?”, 25 February 2025.

The source is used to explain that vaccines may use a weakened or inactivated organism, a part of it, or genetic instructions, and that they form an immune response and memory. The use in the main text is a functional metaphor, not a metaphysical proof.

- [28] Raḍī al-Dīn Abū Naṣr al-Ḥasan ibn al-Faḍl al-Ṭabrisī, Makārim al-Akhlāq, 1:268, chapter on the merit of supplication: “The Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) said: nothing turns back the decree except supplication.” See also al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī, al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qur’ān, on Q 2:186, on supplication being among the causes included within the decree, not an act outside it.

- [29] The Supplication of Abū Ḥamza al-Thumālī, transmitted by al-Sayyid Ibn Ṭāwūs in Iqbāl al-A’ māl among the devotions of the pre-dawn hours of Ramaḍān: “Through you I knew you; you directed me to you and called me to you; were it not for you, I would not know what you are.” Page numbers vary by edition.

- [30] Al-Ghazālī, Ihya’ ‘ Ulūm al-Dīn, the Book of Intention, Sincerity, and Truthfulness.

- [31] Al-Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, Book of the Proof, chapter on the birth of Fāṭima (peace be upon her), ḥadīth 2, p. 458 in the Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya edition: “Fāṭima is a ṣiddīqa and a martyr.” See also Q 19:41 and Q 5:75.

- [32] Al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, al-Amālī, session 61, ḥadīth 1, 1:467: “O Fāṭima, surely God — blessed and exalted — is angered at your anger and pleased at your pleasure.” See also al-Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. 43. The ḥadīth is used here as a witness to the station of Fāṭima al-Zahrā’ (peace be upon her) within the Imami view, not to establish an independent discussion of infallibility or turn the title al-Ṣiddīqa al-Kubrā into a general analytical rank in the project.

- [33] Ṣadr al-Muta'allihīn, al-Asfār, 3:17 ff., and the discussions of the self in vols 8 and 9; see also al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, al-Mizān, 1:208 and 2:436.
- [34] Al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, al-Mizān, 13:192–193, on “each acts according to his shakila” and on the shakila as an influential but non-compelling configuration.
- [35] Ṣadr al-Muta'allihīn, al-Asfār, 3:17 ff., and the discussions of the self in vols 8 and 9; see also al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, al-Mizān, 1:208 and 2:436.
- [36] Al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, al-Mizān, 4:237 ff., on repentance as return to God and on the servant's repentance being preceded by tawfīq and followed by acceptance; and 19:218 on self-accounting in “let every self look to what it has sent ahead for tomorrow”.
- [37] Al-Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, Book of Faith and Unbelief, chapter on the changing states of the heart, ḥadīth 1, reporting from Imam al-Bāqir (peace be upon him) from the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family): “The believer is tried and oft-returning.” The phrase is used to open the door of return, not to praise sin or make it a condition of growth.
- [38] Ibn Shu'ba al-Ḥarrānī, Tuḥaf al-'Uqūl 'an Āl al-Rasūl, 409–410, from the counsels of Imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim (peace be upon him) on dividing time among intimate prayer, livelihood, trusted companions, and lawful pleasure, making the last an aid to the other hours. See also al-Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, 75:321, ḥadīth 18.
- [39] Ṣadr al-Muta'allihīn, al-Asfār, 3:17 ff., and the discussions of the self in vols 8 and 9; see also al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, al-Mizān, 1:208 and 2:436.
- [40] Ṣadr al-Muta'allihīn, al-Asfār, 3:324–325, on the union of the knower and the known, with the clarification that this does not mean the fusion of two independent existents or the union of the servant with God.

- [41] Wendy Wood, Jeffrey M. Quinn, and Deborah A. Kashy, “Habits in Everyday Life: Thought, Emotion, and Action”, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 83, no. 6 (2002): 1281–1297, DOI: 10.1037/0022-3514.83.6.1281; Wendy Wood and Dennis R  nger, “Psychology of Habit”, *Annual Review of Psychology* 67 (2016): 289–314, DOI: 10.1146/annurev-psych-122414-033417.
- [42]   ah  h al-Bukh  r  , *Book of Sales*, chapter on the perfumer and the sale of musk,   ad  th 2101; and   ah  h Muslim, *Book of Righteousness, Kinship, and Manners*, chapter on the desirability of sitting with the righteous,   ad  th 2628, on the likeness of the righteous companion and the bad companion.
- [43] Al-Ghaz  l  , *I  y   ’   l  m al-D  n*, the *Book of the Mysteries of the Prayer*; and R  h  ll  h al-Khomein  , *  d  b al-  l  t*, on presence of heart and the effect of repeated worship in establishing the reality of servanthood.
- [44] Al-  b    b   ’  , *al-Miz  n*, 10:376, on *tawf  q* as the joining of causes that lead to good; 20:303 on easing the way to ease; and 9:38 on “you did not throw when you threw” (Q 8:17).
- [45]   adr al-Muta’ allih  n, *al-Asf  r*, 3:17 ff., and the discussions of the self in vols 8 and 9; see also *al-  b    b   ’  , al-Miz  n*, 1:208 and 2:436.
- [46]   ah  h Muslim, *Book of Faith*, the   ad  th of Gabriel, defining *i  s  n*: “to worship God as though you see him; for if you do not see him, surely he sees you.”

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Where Should You Continue Reading?

The project imposes no single reading order. If you began with a practical or human-centred entry point, move to *The Islamic Intellectual Framework* for the worldview foundation and to *Human Becoming in the Islamic Worldview* for the governing definitions, laws, and models. If you began with the reference text, *The Immortal Self* expands the account of the human being; *No Limits* develops application and comparative critique; *Live Happily* offers contemplative engagement; and *The Journey of a Toiler* gives the ideas narrative embodiment. The Reader's Guide appears at the opening of *Human Becoming in the Islamic Worldview*, while its appended reference glossary governs the terms and directs readers to their fuller explanations.

A Quick Map

◆ **The Islamic Intellectual Framework** — the worldview foundation and the setting for the wider cosmic account.

◆ **Human Becoming in the Islamic Worldview** — the governing reference text of the theory.

◆ **The Immortal Self** — the book on the human being, human becoming, and the human journey.

◆ **No Limits** — the accessible gateway to the laws and comparative critique.

◆ **Live Happily** — the gateway to contemplation and lived experience.

◆ **The Journey of a Toiler** — the gateway to narrative embodiment.

Human Becoming in the Islamic Worldview includes the Reader's Guide to the project and its reference glossary: the first presents the map and reading paths, while the second governs the terms and provides cross-references.

A Message from the Author to the Reader

These books began with a question that has remained with me: How can a person understand the self, move through life, and journey towards God without becoming detached from reality, work, and responsibility? In each book I have tried to approach one aspect of that question: at times by establishing foundations, at times by explanation, and at times through application, contemplation, or story.

I do not present these works as final answers, but as a human endeavour within the Islamic worldview: one that seeks clarity and accepts review. I hope the idea remains the protagonist, the evidence its servant, and language the path by which the idea reaches the reader's mind, heart, and actions.

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About the Author

Abbas Al Humaid

Abbas Al Humaid is an Omani writer, researcher, and strategy adviser. Questions about the human being and purpose have accompanied him from an early age: How does the human being become? How do knowledge, faith, and action become conscious movement towards God? How can depth of meaning be joined to precision in action? His path in reading, writing, and work grew from these connected questions.



In 2023, he was honoured by the confidence of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Sultan of Oman — may God preserve and protect him — through a Royal Decree appointing him to the State Council of the Sultanate of Oman for the 2023–2027 term. This high national responsibility marks a significant stage in his career. He contributes to the Council’s work, particularly through the Economic and Financial Committee, by examining public issues and policies and offering strategic perspectives in support of national development and stronger economic and institutional performance.

He studied Islamic sciences and philosophy in traditional circles, then pursued a professional career spanning nearly three decades in accounting, audit, consulting, strategy, management, and institutional transformation. He spent more than two decades in partnership and leadership roles within international professional-services firms and led projects in strategy, transformation, restructuring, and governance in Oman and beyond.

Alongside his national role, he leads Merit Group and Merit Academy in the United Kingdom. Through these professional and educational platforms, he shares the substance of his experience with leaders, individuals, and institutions and contributes to the

development of strategic, managerial, and professional capability. His international professional credentials in accounting, consulting, and management include CPA, CFE, CMC, and CMgr.

This professional experience has never been separate from his intellectual concerns. He came to see that spirit and strategy, despite their apparent distance, meet in one question: How does purpose become a path, how does vision become action, and how does the human being move from one state to another? His writing therefore seeks to connect contemplation with work, ideas with their effects, and worldview with human movement in life.

He founded the Islamic Theory of Origination Project as an interpretive intellectual project within the Islamic worldview. It examines human becoming, existential movement, growth, conduct, and the human being's purpose and responsibility, linking intellectual foundations to human experience and practical application. His writing ranges across the Islamic worldview, the human being and growth, Qur'anic contemplation, literary narrative, management, and strategy.

Abbas Al Humaid writes as a researcher engaged in interpretive reasoning, distinguishing sacred text from human understanding and religious foundations from interpretive constructions open to examination and review. His writing is grounded in clarity of thought, accurate attribution, respect for the reader's intellect, and openness to criticism and correction.

He makes the digital editions displayed in his online library freely available in the hope that knowledge will travel further and dialogue around it will widen. What he asks of the reader is not quick agreement, but truthful reading, examination of ideas, and correction where correction is due: the idea is the protagonist, evidence serves it, and language is the path.

Online library: <https://abbasalhumaid.com/library/>

Books in the Islamic Theory of Origination Project

The Six Books

◆ **The Islamic Intellectual Framework** — the worldview foundation and the setting for the wider cosmic account.

◆ **Human Becoming in the Islamic Worldview** — the governing reference text of the theory.

◆ **The Immortal Self** — the book on the human being, human becoming, and the human journey.

◆ **No Limits** — the accessible entry point to the laws and comparative critique.

◆ **Live Happily** — the gateway to contemplation and lived experience.

◆ **The Journey of a Toiler** — the gateway to narrative embodiment.

Reader's Guide and Reference Glossary

At its opening, *Human Becoming in the Islamic Worldview* includes the Reader's Guide to the project, its books, and its reading paths; at its end, it includes a simplified reference glossary of its terms. Both belong to the governing reference text itself; neither is a separate volume nor a seventh book within the six-book project.

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