

From the third quarter of Imam al-Ghazālī's, *Iḥyā 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, Traits of Perdition:

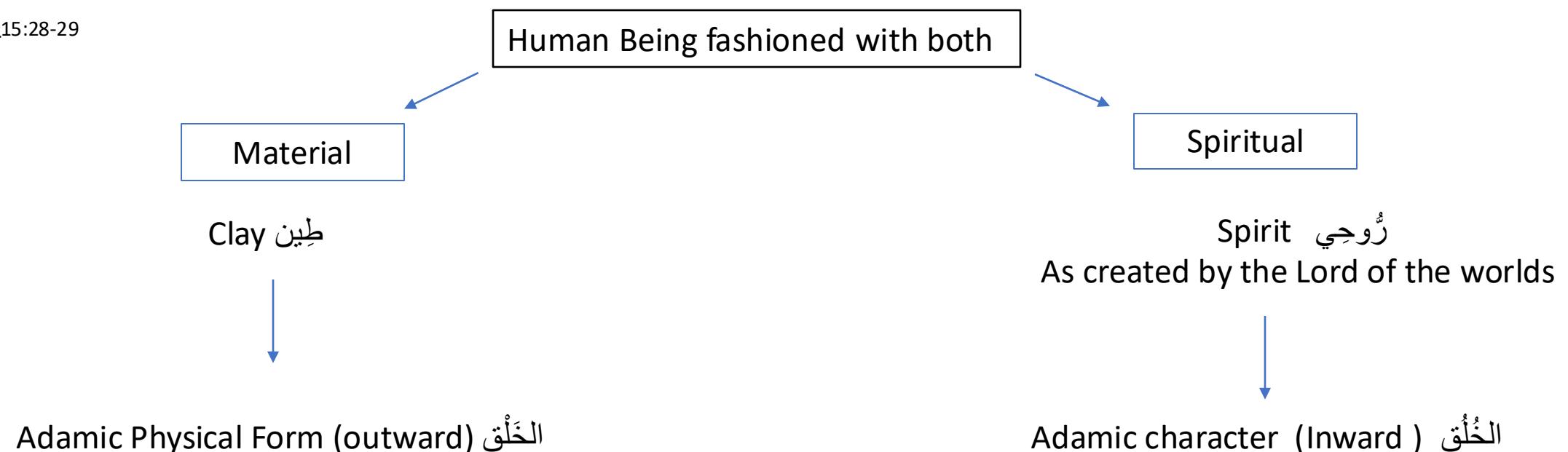
# عجائب القلب ورياضه النفس

Marvels of the Heart and Taming the Ego

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي خَالِقٌ بَشَرًا مِّنْ صَلْصَالٍ مِّنْ حَمَاءٍ مَّسْنُونٍ فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سُجَّدِينَ

'Remember, O Prophet' when your Lord said to the angels, "I am going to create a human being from sounding clay moulded from black mud  
So when I have fashioned him and had a spirit of My Own 'creation' breathed into him, fall down in prostration to him."

Q15:28-29



Understanding Quranic terms which describe the inward faculties of *al-Insān the human being*, and how they inform their cognitive reality:

قلب heart : 132 times in the Quran

روح spirit : 21 times in the Quran

نفس soul: 295 times in the Quran

عقل intellect: Its verb occurs 49 times in the Quran

al-Ghāzalī’s explanation of the Quranic terms denoting our inward faculties:

**فَلْبِ** heart refers to two different things :

1. The physical organ that circulates blood around the body and is found in other creatures, for our purpose, this is not what we are concerned with.
2. A lordly, subtle spiritual faculty that perceives, knows and cognizes and is attached to the physical heart. God addresses this faculty ;it is that which is tormented, punished and sought out. – and rewarded, forgiven and given a felicitous outcome.

**رُوح** spirit it refers to two different things :

1. Is a subtle entity situated in the centre of the physical heart that inhabits and spreads throughout the entire body bringing the light of life to the organs.
2. Its second meaning is like the second meaning for the heart.

al-Ghāzalī's explanation on terms particular to our cognitive make up:

**عقل** intellect it refers to two different things :

1. The indication made from knowledge of things as they are, in this sense it is an attribute of knowledge which its locus is in the heart.
2. It perceives different types of knowledge subtly, and that is the heart.

**نفس** soul it refers to two different things :

1. The capricious, desirous, irascible aspect of a person
2. Also refers to the subtle lordly spiritual faculty, as previously mentioned, which is a person's essence.

The term **نَفْس** soul, depending on context, conveys different meanings:

I. وَمَا أَبْرِئُ نَفْسِي إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ إِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ رَبِّي إِنَّ رَبِّي غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

The unrefined/

capricious 12:53

II. وَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِالنَّفْسِ الْلَّوَامَةِ

The reproaching/ reproachful 75:2

III. يَا أَيُّهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَةُ أَرْجِعِي إِلَى رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَرْضِيَةً فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبْدِي وَادْخُلِي جَنَّتِ

## **The Heart as a Subtle Lordly Spiritual Faculty.**

The Messenger of Allah said, ‘...Indeed, Adam is a piece of flesh; if rectified, every aspect of the body is corrected. This is the heart.’

## **Understanding the Heart's Role as a Subtle Lordly Spiritual Faculty.**

The heart should be understood as the Amir that commands and prohibits the limbs and desires, and it is for the desires and limbs to obey their Amir. However, the desires and limbs seek to imprison the Amir by opting for rebellion and listening to Shaytan.

## The Heart is like a mirror

The heart is a mirror, and knowledge and realities, like images, are reflected in the mirror.  
Therefore;

1. The mirror is one thing,
2. Knowledge and realities are another
3. their reflecting upon the heart is something else.

## Five causes that prevent the heart from knowledge and reality

1. The heart is ineligible to the realities, for it has not yet been developed or has a disability.
2. The heart being impure and rusted
3. The heart is orientated in the wrong direction; knowledge and realities are behind the mirror
4. The veiled heart is a veil between knowledge and realities and the mirror.
5. The heart is able but veiled because of ignorance

## Soldiers of the Heart: The Two Overarching Soldiers

### 1. The faculty of sight is related to the limbs

1. Our motivation to procure benefit is driven by desire, and our motivation to ward off/ protect ourselves from harm is from anger. Both these motivations are expressed through **will** .

### 2. The faculty of inner sight is related to the characteristics of the heart

#### Soldiers of the Heart

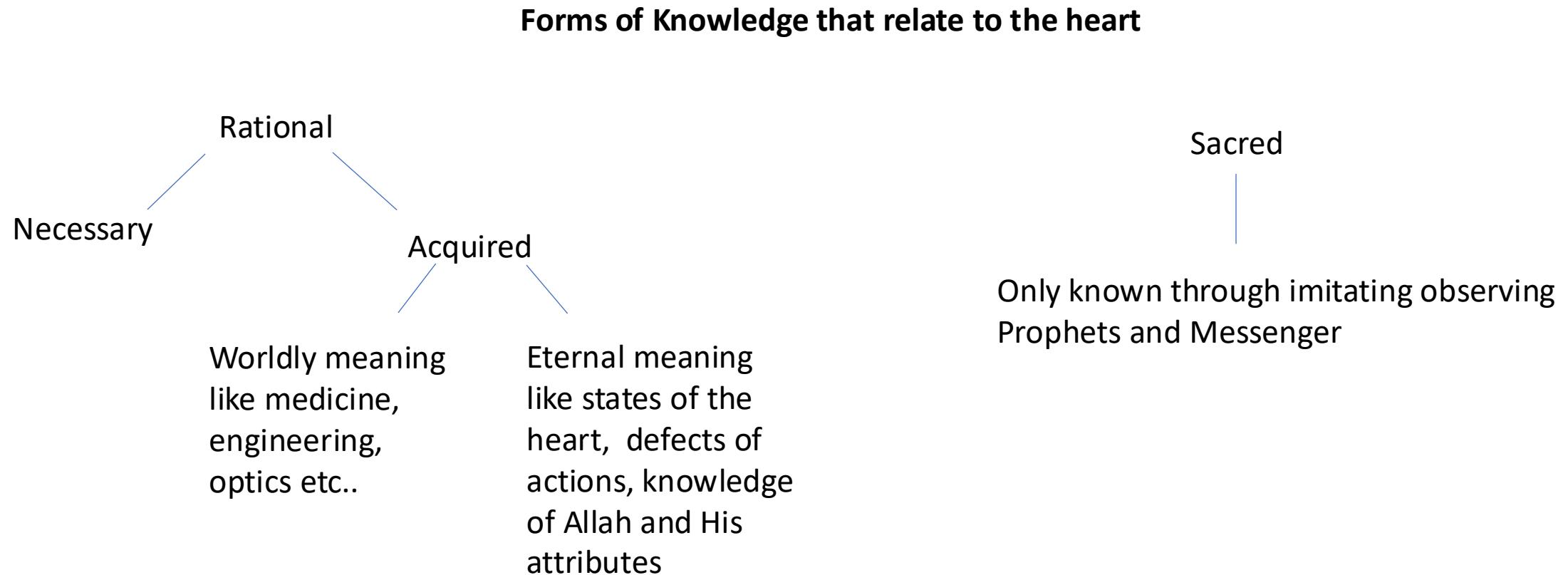
2. Using our limbs to fulfil Our motivation to procure desires and anger to ward off/ protect ourselves from harm. Through **ability** قررة.

3. Knowledge acquired by using our senses; Such as sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. Knowledge obtained through these faculties is called علم الإدراك

- I. Communal sense,
- II. imagination,
- III. thought,
- IV. remembrance
- V. and memory

**Knowledge** is what informs a human being's **Will**.

## The heart's relation to types of knowledge



## **Difference between bestowed and learnt knowledge**

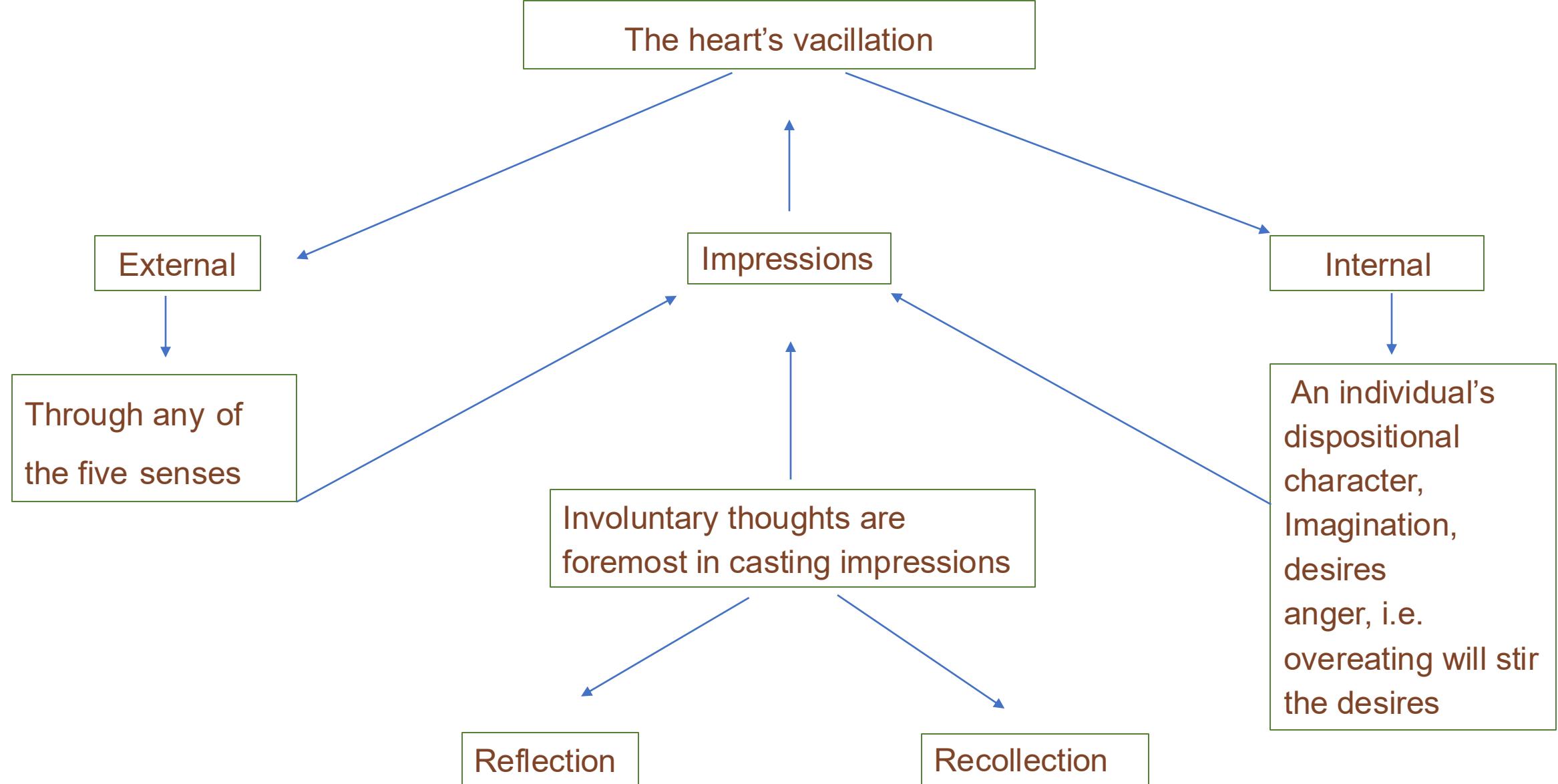
1. Knowledge acquired through investigation and seeking evidence and reflection is learnt knowledge – Scholars
2. Knowledge that is bestowed without any planning, or specific learning, or effort for it:
  - i. When the cause and source of the inspiration is witnessed as in an angel directly informing the heart – Prophets and Messengers
  - ii. When that which is bestowed cannot be explained how that happened- Friends of God

## **Soldiers of the Heart**

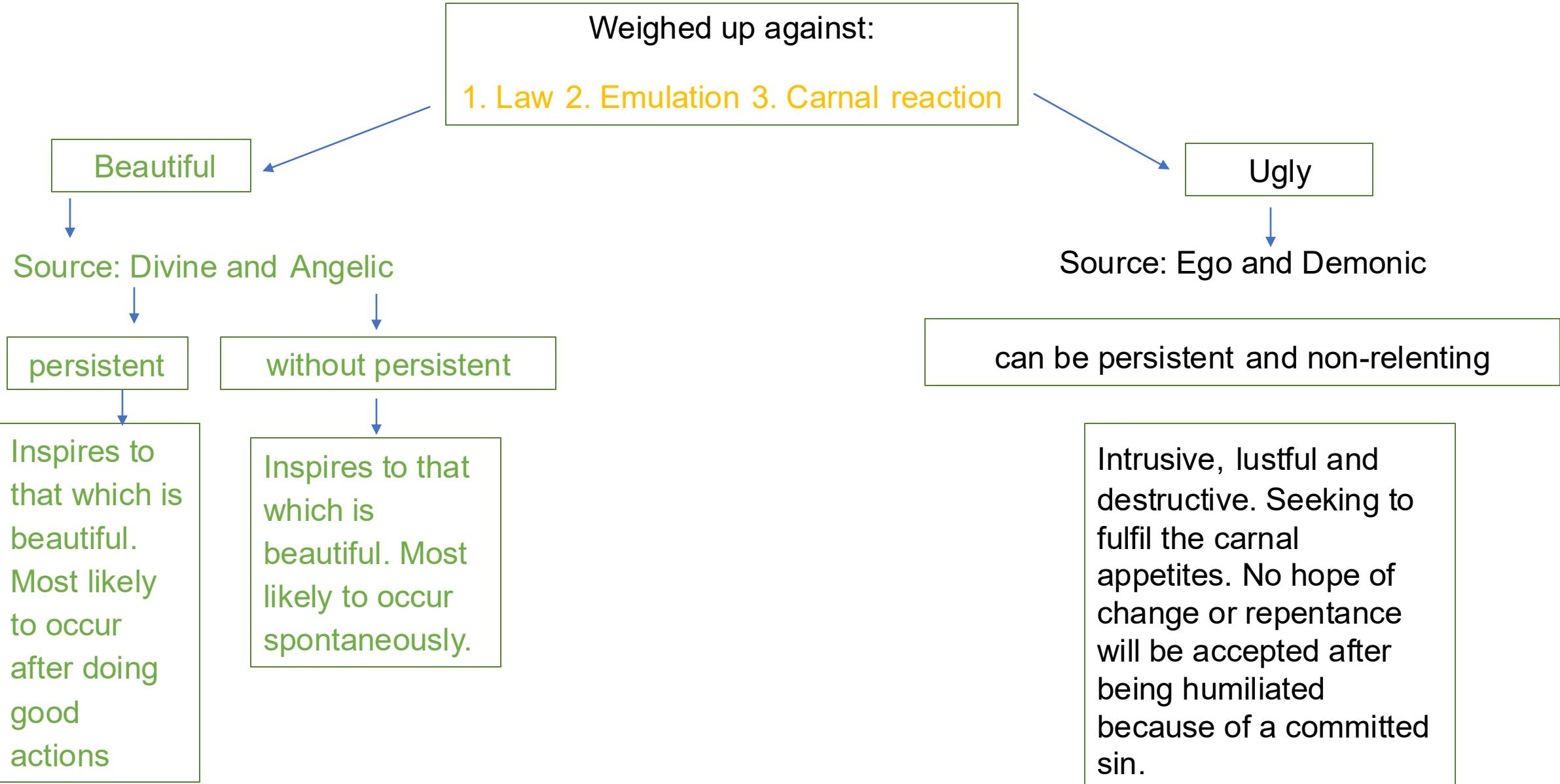
Four constitutional challenges:

1. Predatory – overpowered by anger- enmity, rancour, attacking people
2. Bestial - gluttony, avidity, prevalence
3. Demonic – guile, tricky, misleading, conniving
4. Self Aggrandizing - authority, exclusivity, supremacy

## The heart's vacillation



## Types of thoughts



## **The principal areas through which Shaytan approaches the Human Being**

1. Anger and Appetite
2. Avidity for what people possess and resentful envy
3. Pretentiousness expressed through clothing, furniture and abode
4. Hastiness and lack of ascertainment
5. Monetary wealth
6. Miserliness and fear of poverty
7. Fanatically holding on to ideas of the group
8. Driving the laity to think about the attributes of God
9. Ill opinion of Muslims

## Which thoughts are accountable

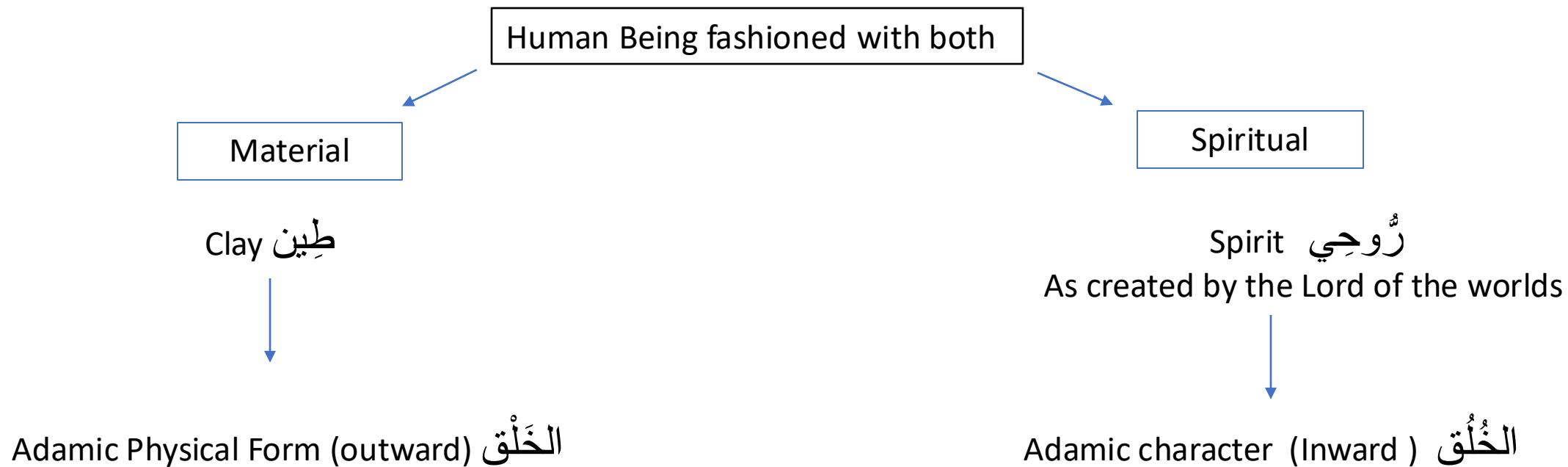
1. Inception
2. Natural inclination
3. Conviction
4. Resolve/Intention

# The Book on Taming the Ego and Refining Character by al-Ghazali

## Taming the Ego and Refining Character

إِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي خَلَقَتُ بَشَرًا مِّنْ طِينٍ (٢١) فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُّوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سُجْدَيْنَ (٢٢)

'Remember, O Prophet' when your Lord said to the angels, "I am going to create a human being from clay. So, when I have fashioned him and had a spirit of My Own 'creation' breathed into him, fall down in prostration to him. Q38:71-72



## Taming the Ego and Refining Character

Character/الخلق is, therefore, a firmly rooted disposition in the soul from whence acts ensue with facility and ease without the need for thought or deliberation.

There exist four things:

1. Performing that which is beautiful or ugly;
2. Having the ability to perform them;
3. Having knowledge of what is beautiful or ugly;
4. generally the soul inclines and approaches to what is easy this can be beautiful or ugly.

The application of the term character/الخلق is reserved for the fourth area and the previous three are not matters of character albeit they do have an informing role in establishing/nurturing character/الخلق.

## **Taming the Ego and Refining Character**

**There are four integrals upon which good character is built.**

- I. The power of knowledge
- II. The power of anger
- III. The power of appetite/desires
- IV. The power of Justice that balances these three powers.

**The principal and cardinal character traits are four upon which other virtues are based:**

- I. Wisdom
- II. Courage
- III. Temperance
- IV. Justice

## **Taming the Ego and Refining Character**

**Two arguments made that character cannot be transformed:**

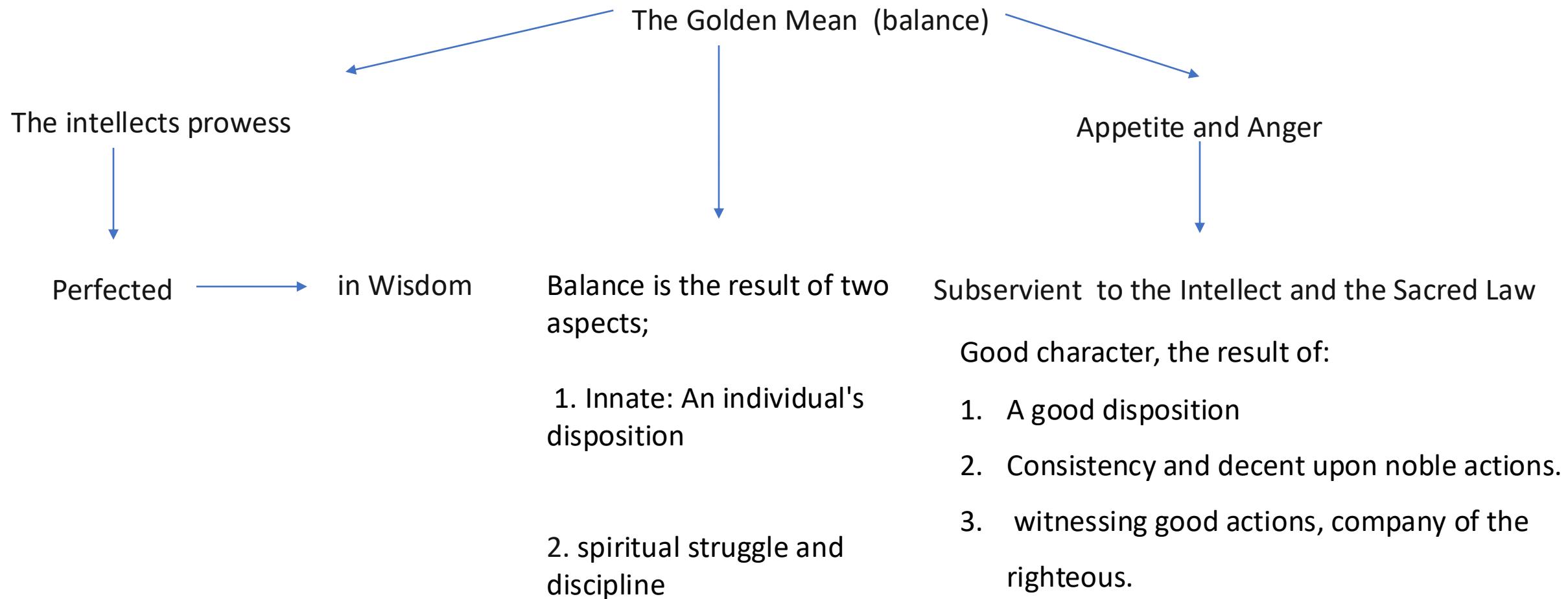
- I. Just like you cannot change your outward form i.e. ( short can't make himself tall) inward ugliness cannot be changed.
- II. The transforming of character requires a complete uprooting of desire and anger

**We say in answer to this that bad character traits not been subject to change there would have been no point in counsels, admonitions and disciplinary punishments.**

**Existents are divided into two categories:**

- I. The first category includes all that which is existing and perfect, its existence and perfection being already established. Sky and Earth, internal and external organs.
- II. The second category includes all that which exists in an imperfect fashion, but which has the power to reach perfection when its condition is met, and this condition is connected to the choice of the servant.

## Means of Acquiring Good Character:



## Taming the Ego and Refining Character

### The Method Used in Refining Character Traits

Through discipline, nurturing and instruction the refining of character traits take place

Treatment is through opposites

1. Thus the sickness of ignorance is treated with learning.
2. The sickness of miserliness with generosity and
3. The sickness of arrogance with humility.

Accepting advice and guidance of a sheikh

### Signs of the Sicknesses of the Heart

﴿قَالَ رَبُّنَا الَّذِي أَعْطَى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهُ ثُمَّ هَدَى﴾

Moses said, 'Our Lord is He who gave everything its form, then gave it guidance.

**He is sick of heart he who loves anything more than he loves Allah, exalted is He.**

Example, how every organ in our body is fulfilled by performing its specific job if there is an inability in this the result is some kind of disorder. The hearts inability to perform the job it was created to fulfil which is knowledge wisdom , gnosis and the love of Allah

### Signs of the Sicknesses of the Heart

All hearts  
are sick  
except  
who Allah  
wills

Physicians  
are the  
people of  
knowledge

Treatment  
through  
opposites  
i.e. with  
the virtue  
that is the  
opposite of  
the vice

Finding  
'Balance'

But since the real middle way is extremely obscure—this is the straight path in this world it is incumbent on every servant to call upon Allah seventeen times a day by saying: {Guide us in the straight path} for it is obligatory to read the opening sura of the Qur'an in every unit of the prayer.

### The Way through which the Defects of the Soul are Recognised

1. The first is to sit with a sheikh
2. The second is that one seeks a truthful, insightful and religious friend and names him as a watchman over one's own self in order to observe one's states and actions and point out anything that he dislikes.
3. The third way is to acquire the knowledge of one's defects from the tongues of one's enemies, for a discontent eye reveals shortcomings.
4. The fourth way is that one mixes with people and tasks oneself to task for every blameworthy trait that one sees in people and attributes it to oneself.

## Signs of noble character as described by Allah

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ١ الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَشِعُونَ ٢ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنِ الْلَّغْوِ مُعْرِضُونَ ٣  
وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِزَكَوَةِ فَاعْلُونَ ٤ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِفُرُوجِهِمْ حَافِظُونَ ٥ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ أَزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكُتْ  
أَيْمَانُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مَلُومِينَ ٦ فَمَنِ ابْتَغَىٰ وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْعَادُونَ ٧ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمْنَاتِهِمْ  
وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُونَ ٨ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَىٰ صَلَوَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُونَ ٩ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْوَارِثُونَ ١٠ الَّذِينَ يَرِثُونَ

1. [How] prosperous are the believers!
2. Those who pray **humbly** بِخُلُقٍ حَسِيبٍ
3. who talk, فِي حَلْوَسِهِمْ
4. who pay the prescribed alms,
5. who guard their chastity
6. except with their spouses or their slaves—with these they are not to blame,
7. but anyone who seeks more than this is exceeding the limits—
8. who are faithful to their trusts and pledges
9. and who keep up their prayers,
10. will rightly be given
11. Paradise as their own, there to remain.

Q23:1-11

## Signs of noble character as described by Allah

الْتَّابُونَ الْعَابِدُونَ الْحَامِدُونَ السَّلِيْحُونَ الرَّكِعُونَ الْأَمِرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَالنَّاهُونَ عَنِ  
الْمُنْكَرِ وَالْحَفِظُونَ لِحُدُودِ اللَّهِ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

[The believers are] those who turn to God in repentance; who worship and praise Him; who bow down and prostrate themselves; who order what is good and forbid what is wrong and observe God's limits. Give glad news to such believers.

Q9:112

## Signs of noble character as described by Allah

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجَلَّتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِذَا تُلَيَّتْ عَلَيْهِمْ رَأْيَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَعَلَى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ ﴿٢﴾ الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقَنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ ﴿٣﴾

The 'true' believers are only those whose hearts tremble at the remembrance of Allah, whose faith increases when His revelations are recited to them, and who put their trust in their Lord. 'They are' those who establish prayer and donate from what We have provided for them. Q8:2-3

وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ يَمْشُونَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ هُوَنَا وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ الْجَاهِلُونَ قَالُوا سَلَامًا ﴿٣﴾

The servants of the Lord of Mercy are those who walk humbly on the earth, and who, when the foolish address them, reply, 'Peace'; Q25:63

## Nurturing of Children

Parents are responsible for nurturing and bringing up children. Therefore, should be mindful of the following areas:

- Observing the quality of their carers
- Manners concerning food
- Manners concerning clothes
- Manners concerning learning
- Acknowledging excellent behaviour and measured in correcting mistakes
- Physical exercise as a form of recreation
- Social manners