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# THE QALB MODEL OF THE SELF: A QUR'ĀNIC PSYCHOSPIRITUAL FRAMEWORK

Zuleyha Keskin\*

**Abstract:** This article proposes the QALB model (Qur'ānic Approach to the Living Being), a Qur'ān-centred framework for understanding the human self. Drawing on Qur'ānic descriptions of the inner life, the model conceptualises the human being through the dynamic interaction of four interrelated faculties: *rūh* (spirit), *qalb* (heart), *nafs* (self), and *'aql* (intellect). The framework is grounded in the epistemological primacy of *wahy* (revelation) and informed by *tadabbur* (reflective engagement with the Qur'ān), together with the concept of *fiṭrah* (innate nature) and the realities of lived human experience. Building on this foundation, the article outlines a Qur'ānic account of the dynamics of the self and examines the mechanisms through which inner transformation occurs. Practices emphasised in the Qur'ān, such as *dhikr* (remembrance), *tawakkul* (trust), *ṣabr* (patience), *shukr* (gratitude), and *du'ā'* (supplication), are explored as processes that gradually bring the inner faculties into greater harmony through the *qalb*. The model ultimately situates the human being within a teleological orientation in which cultivation of *taqwā* (God-consciousness) gives rise to the state of inner peace described in the Qur'ān as *ṭuma'nīnah*. The QALB model offers a conceptual framework for understanding psychospiritual transformation within a coherent Qur'ānic anthropology.

**Keywords:** *QALB model, Islamic psychology, inner peace, model of the self, Qur'ānic model, qalb*

## INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, there has been growing interest in developing approaches to understanding the human self that are grounded in Islamic sources and attentive to the psychospiritual dimensions of human experience. This development reflects scholarly reflection and practical need. While contemporary psychology has produced valuable insights into human behaviour and mental health, many of its dominant paradigms are shaped by philosophical assumptions that marginalise or exclude the spiritual dimension of the human being. For Muslim scholars and practitioners, this raises important questions regarding how

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psychological knowledge can be understood in relation to the Islamic worldview and its understanding of the human self.

In response to these concerns, the field of Islamic psychology has emerged as an interdisciplinary area of enquiry that explores the relationship between Islamic intellectual traditions and contemporary psychological thought. A range of approaches has been developed within this emerging field, including the Islamisation of psychology, integrative models that incorporate Islamic concepts into therapeutic practice, and renewed engagement with the classical Islamic intellectual heritage (*turāth*). Each approach has significantly advanced discussions about the role of spirituality and religious worldview in shaping psychological understanding.

Despite these developments, the field continues to face conceptual fragmentation. Different models often draw on aspects of Islamic thought, such as selected Qur'ānic concepts, elements of classical scholarship, or adaptations of modern psychological theories, often without situating these insights within a fully articulated anthropological and epistemological framework derived from the Qur'ān. This article contributes to filling this gap by proposing a Qur'ān-centred psychospiritual framework of the human self, referred to as the QALB (Qur'ānic Approach to the Living Being) model. Drawing on Qur'ānic descriptions of the human being and the dynamics of the inner life, the model conceptualises the self through the interaction of four interrelated faculties: *rūh* (spirit), *qalb* (heart), *nafs* (self), and *'aql* (intellect).

The framework ultimately situates these processes within a teleological orientation in which the cultivation of *taqwā* (God-consciousness) leads toward the state described in the Qur'ān as *ṭuma'nīnah* (inner peace). In doing so, the article articulates a systematic model that integrates epistemology, anthropology, psychospiritual dynamics, mechanisms of transformation, and teleological purpose within a Qur'ānic understanding of the human being.

The next section provides a critical overview of contemporary approaches within Islamic psychology to identify key conceptual gaps in the current literature. Subsequent sections outline the methodological and epistemological foundations of the proposed framework, develop a Qur'ānic account of the human faculties, and examine the dynamic interactions of the self. Building on this foundation, the article analyses the mechanisms of psychospiritual transformation described in the Qur'ān before exploring the teleological orientation of the human being toward *taqwā* and *ṭuma'nīnah*. The article concludes by situating the QALB model within the broader discourse of Islamic psychology.

The QALB model should therefore be understood as a Qur'ān-centred interpretive framework that seeks to organise key anthropological concepts found in the Qur'ān into a coherent conceptual structure. It does not claim to exhaust the full complexity of the Qur'ānic discourse on the human being but offers one systematic articulation intended to support further scholarly exploration.

## CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC PSYCHOLOGY: A CRITICAL OVERVIEW

Over the past few decades, Islamic psychology has emerged as a growing field of enquiry, reflecting increasing interest in approaches to mental health and human development grounded in Islamic sources to ensure complete understanding of human behaviour and wellbeing.<sup>1</sup> As several scholars note, Islamic psychology has yet to arrive at a widely shared definition or unified conceptual framework.<sup>2</sup> Contemporary contributions to Islamic psychology can broadly be grouped into three overlapping approaches: Islamisation of psychology, integration models, and revival of the classical Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāth*). Each approach has made important contributions to the field's development. At the same time, each reflects distinct methodological and epistemological orientations that shape their strengths and limitations.

This section provides an overview of these approaches, not as an exhaustive survey but as an analytical framing of the current landscape. The aim is to highlight areas where further conceptual development may be beneficial and clarify the contribution of a Qur'ān-centred psychospiritual framework. While the article engages with literature commonly described as Islamic psychology, the proposed framework is more accurately understood as a Qur'ānic psychospiritual model of the human being.

### *Islamisation of Psychology*

The Islamisation of psychology represents one of the earliest and most influential responses to the dominance of Western psychological paradigms. Among its key pioneers is Malik Badri, whose work provided a foundational critique of the uncritical adoption of secular psychological theories within Muslim contexts.<sup>3</sup> Badri argues that modern psychology is shaped by philosophical assumptions that exclude the spiritual dimension of the human being. He observed that Western psychology often presents a “soulless” account of human nature, noting that “Criteria which fail to include the spiritual side of man can only find anchorage in a society blinded by materialism.”<sup>4</sup>

A central contribution of this approach lies in its role as an epistemological awakening. It exposed the extent to which psychological theories are not value-neutral but are shaped by ontological and moral commitments.<sup>5</sup> In doing so, it reasserted the legitimacy of revelation (*wahy*) and the Islamic intellectual tradition as valid sources of knowledge about the human being.<sup>6</sup> This marked an important shift, encouraging Muslim scholars to critically evaluate imported frameworks rather than adopting them wholesale.

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<sup>1</sup> G. Hussein Rassool, *Islamic Psychology: Human Behaviour and Experience from an Islamic Perspective* (Routledge, 2021), 6–7, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429354762>.

<sup>2</sup> Carrie York Al-Karam, “Islamic Psychology: Towards a 21st Century Definition and Conceptual Framework,” *Journal of Islamic Ethics* 2 (2018): 97, <https://doi.org/10.1163/24685542-12340020>.

<sup>3</sup> Malik Badri, *The Dilemma of Muslim Psychologists* (MWH London Publishers, 1979), 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 20–24.

<sup>6</sup> Amber Haque et al., “Integrating Islamic Traditions in Modern Psychology: Research Trends in the Last Ten Years,” *Journal of Muslim Mental Health* 10, no. 1 (2016): 84–85.

At the same time, the Islamisation project has limitations. Its primary orientation has been reactive, focusing on critiquing existing psychological models rather than constructing a fully articulated alternative, a criticism that the Islamisation movement has received overall.<sup>7</sup> While this approach raises questions about the compatibility of Western psychology with Islamic thought, it does not always provide a systematic framework that comprehensively replaces or reconfigures these models. As a result, key elements of a psychological system, such as a clearly defined ontology of the human being, an integrated account of internal processes, and a structured model of psychological development, remain underdeveloped.

In this sense, Islamisation represents a starting point, but not complete resolution. It initiates critique but does not fully advance the reconstruction required for a coherent Islamic psychospiritual framework.

### ***Integration Models***

Alongside the Islamisation of psychology, a second major strand within contemporary Islamic psychology focuses on integration of Islamic concepts with existing psychological theories. Scholars such as Rassool, Rothman, Haque and Keshavarzi have contributed significantly to this approach, particularly in the context of counselling and psychotherapy.<sup>8</sup>

Integration models represent a substantial strand within contemporary Islamic psychology and are likely to continue expanding. These approaches bridge the gap between theory and practice by incorporating Islamic principles into psychological and therapeutic frameworks. In many cases, this involves adapting established psychological models, such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy<sup>9</sup> and Post-traumatic Growth Theory, in ways that align with Islamic beliefs, values, and practices, thereby making them more relevant for Muslim clients. Rassool has played a leading and critical role in situating psychological understanding within an Islamic worldview that recognises the interrelationship between the spiritual and psychological dimensions of the human being.<sup>10</sup> This broader movement toward integrating spirituality into psychological practice has also been recognised within the psychology of religion literature. Kenneth Pargament, for example, observes that “mental health professionals have often viewed spirituality more as a cause of problems than as a source of solutions,”<sup>11</sup> and argues that religious and spiritual traditions can be constructively incorporated into clinical practice, particularly in response to the limitations of Eurocentric psychological paradigms.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Husein Dzilo, “The Concept of ‘Islamization of Knowledge’ and its Philosophical Implications,” *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 23, no. 3 (2012): 249.

<sup>8</sup> Rassool, *Islamic Psychology*; Abdallah Rothman, *Developing a Model of Islamic Psychology and Psychotherapy* (Routledge, 2021); Hooman Keshavarzi and Amber Haque, “Outlining a Psychotherapy Model for Enhancing Muslim Mental Health Within an Islamic Context,” *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 23, no. 3 (2013).

<sup>9</sup> Haque et al., “Integrating Islamic Traditions in Modern Psychology,” 76.

<sup>10</sup> G. Hussein Rassool, *Islāmic Counselling and Psychotherapy: An Introduction to Theory and Practice*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003453413>.

<sup>11</sup> Kenneth I. Pargament, *Spiritually Integrated Psychotherapy: Understanding and Addressing the Sacred* (Guilford Press, 2007), 7.

<sup>12</sup> Harold G. Koenig et al., *Handbook of Religion and Health* (Oxford University Press, 2001).

Within the Islamic psychology literature, several scholars have developed models that situate therapeutic practice within an Islamic conceptual framework. Keshavarzi and Haque, for example, propose a psychotherapy model that explicitly incorporates Islamic understandings of the human being and emphasises the importance of addressing psychological issues within the broader religious and cultural context of Muslim clients.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Rothman argues that meaningful engagement between Islam and psychology requires attention to the Islamic conception of human nature, particularly the interrelated dimensions of the soul such as the *nafs*, *qalb*, *'aql*, and *rūh*, proposing a conceptual model intended to inform contemporary psychological theory and psychotherapy.<sup>14</sup> Such contributions represent important steps toward the development of applied models that are responsive to the lived realities of Muslims seeking psychospiritual support.

One of the key strengths of these integration models lies in their practical orientation. They provide clinicians with conceptual tools that enable incorporation of religious and spiritual dimensions into therapeutic practice while remaining attentive to professional psychological standards. In this sense, integration models contribute significantly to the development of clinically applicable approaches within Islamic psychology and support the emergence of training programmes, therapeutic interventions, and research exploring the relationship between spirituality and psychological wellbeing.<sup>15</sup>

At the same time, the integration approach raises important epistemological questions. In many cases, the underlying structure of the psychological framework remains rooted in contemporary secular psychological theories, with Islamic concepts introduced as complementary or corrective elements.<sup>16</sup> This creates potential tension regarding epistemic priority, as it remains unclear whether revelation functions as the primary source of knowledge within such frameworks or operates alongside existing psychological paradigms.

This tension can generate conceptual challenges since Islamic concepts, such as the human faculties, are embedded within a comprehensive metaphysical and theological worldview that differs significantly from the philosophical assumptions underlying modern psychology. When these concepts are mapped onto psychological constructs derived from different epistemological traditions, there is a risk that their meanings may be partially reinterpreted or selectively incorporated in ways that do not fully reflect their original conceptual context.<sup>17</sup>

Rather than viewing this as a limitation of individual scholars, it may be more accurately understood as a structural challenge within the integration approach. The question is not whether Islamic concepts can be incorporated into psychological frameworks, but whether they are foundational organising principles or remain interpretive additions to pre-existing

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<sup>13</sup> Keshavarzi and Haque, "Outlining a Psychotherapy Model," 230–231.

<sup>14</sup> Abdallah Rothman and Adrian Coyle, "Toward a Framework for Islamic Psychology and Psychotherapy: An Islamic Model of the Soul," *Journal of Religion and Health* 57 (2018): 1742.

<sup>15</sup> Haque et al., "Integrating Islamic Traditions in Modern Psychology," 76–77.

<sup>16</sup> Rothman and Coyle, "Toward a Framework for Islamic Psychology and Psychotherapy," 1731.

<sup>17</sup> Amber Haque, "Psychology from Islamic Perspective: Contributions of Early Muslim Scholars and Challenges to Contemporary Muslim Psychologists," *Journal of Religion and Health* 43, no. 4 (2004): 359–360.

theoretical models. Addressing this issue requires greater clarity regarding epistemological hierarchy and methodological grounding in the development of an Islamic psychospiritual model.

### ***Turāth Revival***

A third approach within contemporary Islamic psychology involves renewed engagement with the classical Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāth*). This includes the works of scholars such as Abū Zayd al-Balkhī, al-Ghazālī, and Ibn Sīnā, whose writings offer rich insights into the inner dimensions of the human being.<sup>18</sup>

Revival of the Islamic intellectual tradition has played an important role in challenging the assumption that psychology is exclusively a modern Western discipline. Early Muslim scholars wrote extensively on the inner dimensions of the human being, particularly the self and states of the heart, offering detailed reflections on human functioning centuries before the emergence of modern psychology.<sup>19</sup> These works address emotional and psychological disturbances while recognising the interconnection between spiritual wellbeing and mental health.<sup>20</sup>

The rediscovery of such contributions highlights a strong presence of psychospiritual reflection within the Islamic intellectual heritage and challenges the assumption that systematic engagement with mental wellbeing is solely a product of modern Western scholarship. For example, Malik Badri notes that the 9<sup>th</sup> century scholar Abū Zayd al-Balkhī developed a sophisticated classification of emotional disorders including fear, anger, sadness, and obsessive thoughts, while also proposing therapeutic strategies for their treatment.<sup>21</sup> While the contributions of classical scholars provide invaluable foundations for contemporary discourse, the challenge lies in translating these insights into coherent conceptual frameworks capable of engaging contemporary scholarship.

### ***Identifying the Gap***

Taken together, these three approaches represent significant and valuable contributions to the development of Islamic psychology. Each has advanced the field in important ways: Islamisation through critical engagement with existing paradigms, integration through the development of applied and clinical models, and *turāth* revival through renewed engagement with the richness of the Islamic intellectual heritage. At the same time, the diversity of these

<sup>18</sup> Abū Zayd al-Balkhī, *Sustenance of the Soul*, trans. Malik Badri (IIIT, 2013); Abū Hāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* [Revival of the Religious Sciences] (Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1982); Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), *Avicenna's De Anima [On the Soul]: Being the Psychological Part of Kitāb al-Shifā' [The Book of Healing]*, ed. Fazlur Rahman (Oxford University Press, 1959).

<sup>19</sup> Haque, "Psychology from Islamic Perspective," 357–360.

<sup>20</sup> Rania Awaad and Sara Ali, "A Modern Conceptualization of Phobia in al-Balkhī's 9th-Century Treatise: Sustenance of the Body and Soul," *Journal of Anxiety Disorders* 37 (2016): 90, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.janxdis.2015.11.003>.

<sup>21</sup> Malik Badri, *Abu Zayd al-Balkhi's Sustenance of the Soul: The Cognitive Behavior Therapy of a Ninth Century Physician* (International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2013), 11.

approaches highlights the need for frameworks that integrate questions of epistemology, ontology, and the human being's ultimate purpose within a coherent conceptual structure.

In this context, an additional contribution lies in exploring models derived more directly from the Qur'ān as a primary epistemic source. Such a framework would require reordering epistemic priorities, placing revelation at the centre, while engaging other sources of knowledge in a supporting role. This points to the need for a Qur'ān-centred psychospiritual framework. The following sections contribute toward this aim by outlining the methodological foundations, ontological structure, and dynamic processes of the human being as derived from the Qur'ānic perspective.

## METHODOLOGICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

### *Wahy (Divine Revelation)*

The framework proposed in this study is grounded in a distinct epistemological orientation rooted in the Islamic intellectual tradition. Central to this orientation is recognition of *wahy* (Divine revelation) as a primary source of knowledge about a human being's nature. The Qur'ān describes itself as “a clarification for all things, and a guidance and mercy,”<sup>22</sup> indicating that revelation provides insight into the human being.

Within the Islamic worldview, the human being cannot be fully understood through empirical observation alone but must be first and foremost informed by revealed guidance that speaks directly to the spiritual and existential dimensions of human life. The Qur'ān repeatedly presents itself as a source of insight into the human condition, addressing the inner states of the self, the dynamics of moral struggle and its impact on the human faculties, and the processes through which the human being moves toward spiritual growth.<sup>23</sup>

Recognising revelation as an epistemic source does not negate the value of empirical enquiry or contemporary research. Rather, it establishes a hierarchy of knowledge in which revelation provides the foundational orientation through which other forms of knowledge are interpreted.

### *Tadabbur*

In engaging the Qur'ān as a source of psychospiritual insight, the method of *tadabbur*, reflective contemplation of the Qur'ānic text, plays a central role. The Qur'ān repeatedly calls on believers to reflect on its verses and the realities they describe: “Do they not reflect upon the Qur'ān, or are there locks upon their hearts?”<sup>24</sup> and “[This is] a blessed Book which We have revealed to you so that they may reflect upon its verses and that those of understanding may take heed.”<sup>25</sup> Through such reflection, the Qur'ānic text becomes a source of conceptual and experiential insight into the dynamics of the human self, including themes such as

<sup>22</sup> Qur'ān 16:89.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, Qur'ān 10:57 and 41:44, which describe the Qur'ān as guidance and healing for hearts.

<sup>24</sup> Qur'ān 47:24.

<sup>25</sup> Qur'ān 38:29.

emotional states and the relationship between the heart and intellect. *Tadabbur* therefore functions as an interpretive methodology, as instructed by Allāh, through which Qur'ānic descriptions of the human being can be brought into dialogue with contemporary scholarship on the human self.

### ***Fiṭrah***

Another important epistemic component is the concept of *fiṭrah*, the innate disposition with which human beings are created. It is “the pristine nature within humans that leads them to acknowledge the truth of God’s existence and to follow His guidance.”<sup>26</sup> This innate disposition enables the human being to engage in *tadabbur* in a manner that recognises Divine guidance and aligns the self with its original nature. In psychospiritual terms, the concept of *fiṭrah* provides a framework for understanding the inherent capacities and tendencies of the human being. It also offers a point of connection between revelation and lived human experience, suggesting that the insights of revelation resonate with the deeper structure of human nature.

### ***Lived Experience***

Lived experience also plays an important methodological role within this framework. Human states such as anxiety, hope, despair, trust, and moral struggle are not merely abstract categories but experienced realities that shape everyday life. The Qur'ān frequently addresses these states in ways that resonate with the lived experiences of individuals navigating hardship and uncertainty, reminding believers that “indeed, with hardship comes ease.”<sup>27</sup> Attending to lived experience, therefore, allows the conceptual insights derived from revelation to be explored in relation to the phenomenology of human life.

Taken together, these epistemic sources of *wahy*, reflective engagement with the Qur'ān through *tadabbur*, the concept of *fiṭrah*, and the insights of lived experience, provide the methodological foundations for a Qur'ān-centred psychospiritual framework. By situating study of the human being within this broader epistemological horizon, the framework articulates an understanding of the human being that is faithful to the Islamic intellectual tradition while remaining open to constructive engagement with contemporary scholarship on human experience.

## **ONTOLOGY OF THE HUMAN BEING (QUR'ĀNIC ANTHROPOLOGY)**

A Qur'ān-centred approach to understanding the human being requires a clear account of human nature. Within the Islamic intellectual tradition, a person is understood through interconnected faculties that shape understanding, moral awareness, and behaviour. Among the most central of these are the *rūḥ*, *qalb*, *nafs*, and *'aql*. These faculties do not represent discrete

<sup>26</sup> Aisha Utz, *Psychology from the Islamic Perspective* (International Islamic Publishing House, 2011), 47.

<sup>27</sup> Qur'ān 94:5–6.

compartments but interrelated dimensions of the human being that interact dynamically in shaping the human self.<sup>28</sup>

This understanding reflects a broader Qur'ānic anthropology in which spiritual, moral, and experiential dimensions of the human being are deeply intertwined. Contemporary scholarship has increasingly emphasised the importance of grounding models of the human self within this anthropological framework rather than relying solely on conceptualisations derived from secular intellectual traditions.<sup>29</sup>

### ***The Rūḥ: Source of Divine Orientation***

The *rūḥ* represents the spiritual dimension of the human being and reflects the Divine origin of human life. The Qur'ān describes the creation of the human being as involving the Divine act of breathing the spirit into the human form: “When I have fashioned him and breathed into him of My spirit...”<sup>30</sup> Through this endowment, human beings possess a capacity that extends beyond biological existence, enabling transcendence beyond the purely physical and receptivity to Divine guidance.

At the same time, the Qur'ān indicates that the full nature of the spirit remains beyond complete human comprehension: “They ask you about the spirit. Say: the spirit is from the command of my Lord, and you have been given only a little knowledge.”<sup>31</sup> While aspects of its role may be recognised, the ontological reality of the *rūḥ* ultimately belongs to the domain of Divine knowledge.

Within Qur'ānic anthropology, the *rūḥ* may therefore be understood as the spiritual dimension of the human being that grounds the human capacity for transcendence and orientation toward Divine purpose. It provides the deeper spiritual grounding through which the *qalb* becomes capable of receptivity to Divine guidance. While the *nafs* reflects fluctuating impulses and tendencies, and the *'aql* facilitates reflective evaluation, the *rūḥ* anchors the human being in relation to ultimate meaning. As the *nafs* undergoes purification and the *'aql* functions in a balanced manner, the orienting influence of the *rūḥ* becomes more fully reflected in the condition of the *qalb*. In this way, the *rūḥ* contributes to cultivation of a sound heart, as purification of the *nafs* and the balanced functioning of the *'aql* allow its deeper spiritual orientation to be reflected in the *qalb*.

While the present framework identifies an orienting role for the *rūḥ* within Qur'ānic anthropology, this should not be understood as an exhaustive account of its ontological reality. The Qur'ān itself emphasises that knowledge of the *rūḥ* remains limited, and therefore any conceptual description must remain provisional and interpretive.

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<sup>28</sup> Zuleyha Keskin, *Qur'ānic Concepts in Islamic Psychology and Spirituality: Application in the Modern World* (Routledge, 2025), 2.

<sup>29</sup> Rassool, *Islamic Psychology*, 6–7.

<sup>30</sup> Qur'ān 15:29.

<sup>31</sup> Qur'ān 17:85.

### ***The Qalb: The Centre of Perception, Knowledge and Spiritual Awareness***

Central to Qur'ānic anthropology is the concept of the *qalb*, which functions as the centre of understanding and spiritual awareness. The Qur'ān repeatedly associates perception and comprehension with the heart:<sup>32</sup> “Have they not travelled through the land so that they may have hearts with which to understand?”<sup>33</sup> In this sense, the *qalb* represents more than an emotional centre; it is the faculty through which the human being perceives, knows, and becomes receptive to Divine guidance.<sup>34</sup>

The Qur'ān emphasises the significance of the heart's condition, noting that ultimate success depends on coming before Allāh with a sound heart: “A day when neither wealth nor children will be of any benefit, except one who comes to Allāh with a sound heart.”<sup>35</sup> This verse places the *qalb* in a central position. While the *nafs* and *'aql* influence the heart in positive and negative ways, the condition of the *qalb* ultimately shapes how these faculties operate. The centrality of the *qalb* also means its condition influences the functioning of the *'aql* and *nafs*. When the heart becomes hardened, perception of truth and receptivity to guidance may be impaired.<sup>36</sup> Conversely, a receptive heart allows knowledge and moral awareness to be internalised. In this sense, the *qalb* is the central faculty through which impulses arising from the *nafs*, reflections generated by the *'aql*, and the orienting influence of the *rūḥ* converge.<sup>37</sup>

### ***The Nafs: The Seat of Impulses and Desires***

The *nafs* represents the dynamic dimension of the human self through which impulses, desires, and behavioural inclinations emerge. The Qur'ān presents the *nafs* as possessing moral potential and susceptibility to deviation. In describing the formation of the human self, the Qur'ān states it was fashioned and inspired with awareness of *fujūr* (rebellion) and *taqwā* (moral consciousness), emphasising its capacity for purification or corruption:

By the soul (*nafs*), and how He formed it, and inspired it [to know] its own rebellion (*fujūr*) and piety (*taqwā*)! The one who purifies his soul (*nafs*) succeeds and the one who corrupts it fails.<sup>38</sup>

Within Qur'ānic discourse, the *nafs* is associated with states that reflect varying degrees of moral and spiritual awareness. These include *nafs al-ammārah* (the commanding *nafs*), *nafs al-lawwāmah* (the self-accusing *nafs*), and *nafs al-muṭma'innah* (the *nafs* at peace).<sup>39</sup> These descriptions suggest the *nafs* is not static but capable of transformation through knowledge, spiritual practice, and conscious effort.

<sup>32</sup> In this article, the Arabic term *qalb* is used to refer to the Qur'ānic concept of the heart as the centre of perception and spiritual awareness. For readability, the English term “heart” is occasionally used when referring to this concept in a general sense.

<sup>33</sup> Qur'ān 22:46.

<sup>34</sup> Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Wonders of the Heart*, trans. W. J. Skellie (Islamic Book Trust, 2007), 6.

<sup>35</sup> Qur'ān 26:88–89.

<sup>36</sup> Qur'ān 39:22.

<sup>37</sup> Keskin, *Qur'ānic Concepts in Islamic Psychology and Spirituality*, 9–12.

<sup>38</sup> Qur'ān 91:7–10.

<sup>39</sup> Qur'ān 12:53; 75:2; 89:27–30.

In this sense, the *nafs* may be understood as the seat of impulses and desires within the human self. It constitutes the dynamic arena in which the inner struggle unfolds and through which the human being undergoes processes of refinement and transformation.<sup>40</sup>

### ***The 'Aql: Faculty of Reflection and Rational Discernment***

The *'aql* refers to the human faculty of reflection and rational discernment through which meaning is interpreted and knowledge is evaluated. Interestingly, the Qur'ān does not present the *'aql* as a distinct organ. Rather, it repeatedly calls on human beings to reflect on the signs of creation and revelation,<sup>41</sup> indicating the central role of reflective reasoning in human awareness.

Within Qur'ānic anthropology, the *'aql* enables recognition of relationships between actions, causes, and consequences. Through reflection on revelation, the self, and the natural world, it allows individuals to interpret experiences, discern patterns, and evaluate possible courses of action.<sup>42</sup>

In relation to the broader system of faculties, the *'aql* has a mediating and evaluative function. While impulses arise through the *nafs* and deeper perception occurs through the *qalb*, the *'aql* enables reflective deliberation through which different possibilities are weighed and courses of action are determined.

### ***Interrelationship of the Faculties***

Although these faculties can be described analytically, they operate as an integrated system rather than as isolated components. Within this system, the *qalb* occupies a central position. Impulses arising from the *nafs* and reflections generated through the *'aql* converge within the heart, where perception, spiritual awareness, and receptivity to guidance occur. The *rūh*, in turn, provides the deeper orientation that directs the human being toward meaning and Divine purpose beyond the physical.

This integrated understanding reflects a holistic Qur'ānic anthropology in which moral, spiritual, and experiential dimensions of the human being are inseparable. Human wellbeing is therefore understood not merely as emotional or psychological wellbeing but as the harmonious alignment of these faculties in relation to spiritual awareness, receptivity to guidance, and inner peace.

The interaction of these faculties provides the conceptual foundation for the framework developed in this study. The QALB model synthesises this understanding by illustrating how the central human faculties operate within an integrated system shaped by revelation and oriented toward psychospiritual transformation. Figure 1 presents this structure by situating the *rūh*, *qalb*, *nafs*, and *'aql* within the broader epistemological foundation of *wahy* and the

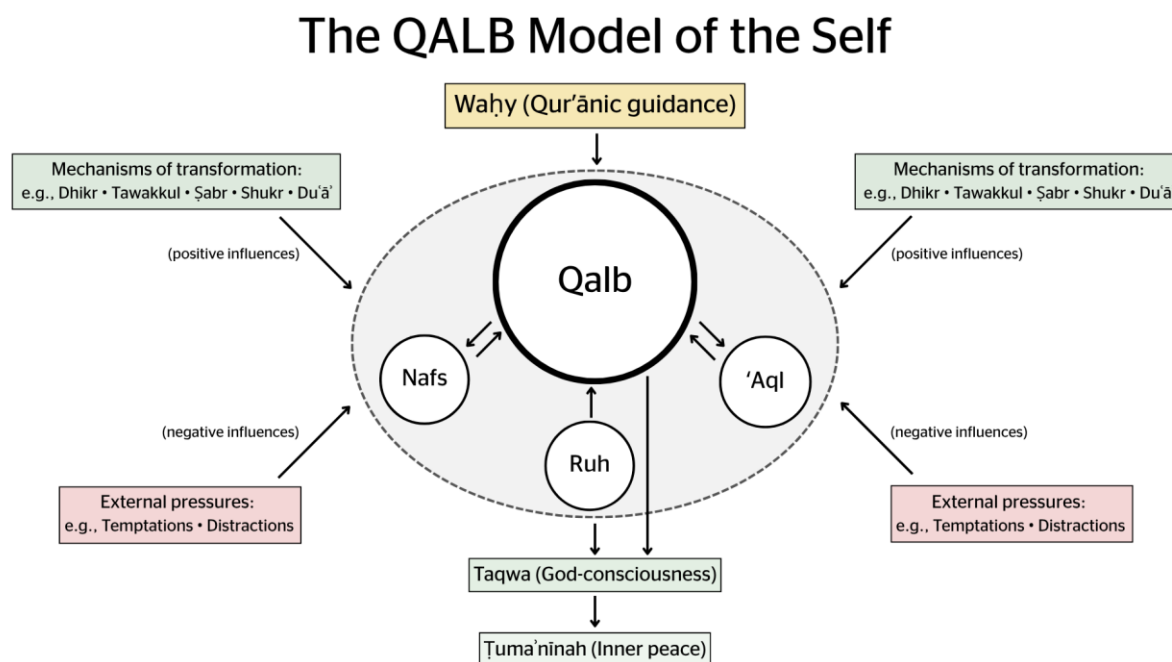
<sup>40</sup> Keskin, *Qur'ānic Concepts in Islamic Psychology and Spirituality*, 16.

<sup>41</sup> For example, Qur'ān 2:242; 45:5.

<sup>42</sup> Keskin, *Qur'ānic Concepts in Islamic Psychology and Spirituality*, 15.

transformative processes described in the Qur’ān. The distinctions between these faculties are therefore analytical rather than ontologically discrete. They represent interrelated dimensions of the human being that can be conceptually distinguished for clarity, while remaining dynamically integrated within the lived reality of the self.

Figure 1 provides a conceptual representation of these relationships. The visual structure is intended as a heuristic illustration of the interaction between the faculties rather than a literal depiction of separate ontological components. The diagram highlights functional relationships that emerge within the Qur’ānic description of the inner life.



**Figure 1. The QALB model: A Qur’ānic psychospiritual framework of the human self**

### THE DYNAMICS OF THE SELF

As illustrated in the QALB model (Figure 1), interaction of the human faculties generates a dynamic psychospiritual process. Building on the ontological framework outlined above, the Qur’ānic conception of the human being also implies a dynamic understanding of the self. The faculties do not function as static components but interact continuously, producing shifting inner states that shape perception, inclination, deliberation, and action. Human psychospiritual life is therefore best understood as a process rather than a fixed condition. Within this perspective, the Qur’ān presents the self as moving between states of imbalance and alignment, heedlessness and awareness, and anxiety and trust. This dynamic nature is reflected in the Qur’ānic portrayal of the human being as morally and spiritually responsive.

At the centre of this process lies the *qalb*, whose condition shapes how experiences are interpreted and how guidance is received. The Qur’ān describes the heart as capable of becoming hardened, sealed, diseased, or spiritually receptive depending on one’s orientation

and actions.<sup>43</sup> A healthy heart (*qalb salīm*) remains open to Divine guidance, whereas a diseased or hardened heart loses this receptivity.

The *nafs* likewise exists in different states. The Qur'ān refers to the *nafs al-ammārah*, which inclines toward wrongdoing, the *nafs al-lawwāmah*, which reproaches itself, and the *nafs al-muṭma'innah*, which has attained inner peace.<sup>44</sup> These states reflect the possibility of moral struggle, purification, and spiritual refinement.

The *'aql*, as the faculty of reflection and rational discernment, plays a decisive role in this process. When properly engaged, it enables discernment, reflection on the signs of Allāh,<sup>45</sup> and sound judgment. When neglected or overridden by unchecked impulses, however, its capacity for sound judgment becomes impaired, as the Qur'ān criticises those who fail to use their reason.<sup>46</sup>

These variations across the faculties indicate that the human self is not a static entity but a dynamic reality shaped through interaction of its internal dimensions. Impulses arising from the *nafs*, reflections facilitated by the *'aql*, and the orienting influence of the *rūḥ* converge within the *qalb*, where moral perception and receptivity to guidance take shape. The condition of the heart therefore reflects the ongoing interplay of these faculties, shaping how the human being perceives, interprets, and responds to life. Within this framework, the significance of life events is not determined primarily by their external form but by their impact on the condition of the heart and orientation of the self. This illustrates the epistemic hierarchy of knowledge established within the framework, in which revelation provides the foundational orientation through which other forms of knowledge and experience are understood.

### ***Heedlessness and Remembrance***

One key dynamic described in the Qur'ān is the movement between heedlessness (*ghaflah*) and remembrance (*dhikr*). Heedlessness refers to a condition in which individuals become inattentive to Divine guidance and lose sight of their ultimate purpose and accountability before Allāh. The Qur'ān frequently warns against this state, describing those whose hearts are inattentive to truth as people who “have hearts with which they do not understand.”<sup>47</sup> In Islamic literature, heedlessness is often described as a condition in which the heart becomes detached from remembrance of Allāh, giving rise to disturbances within the inner life.<sup>48</sup> When the *qalb* is dominated by heedlessness, impulses arising from the *nafs* may proceed unchecked, while the reflective capacity of the *'aql* becomes directed primarily toward immediate concerns rather

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<sup>43</sup> Qur'ān 2:7; 39:22.

<sup>44</sup> Qur'ān 12:53; 75:2; 89:27–30.

<sup>45</sup> Qur'ān 3:190–191.

<sup>46</sup> Qur'ān 8:22.

<sup>47</sup> Qur'ān 7:179.

<sup>48</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *Diseases of the Hearts and Their Cures* (Daar us-Sunnah Publishers, 2003); Hamza Yusuf, *Purification of the Heart: Signs, Symptoms and Cures of the Spiritual Diseases of the Heart* (Sandala, 2012), 72.

than deeper questions of meaning and accountability. In such circumstances, the orienting influence of the *rūḥ* becomes obscured, leaving the heart less receptive to guidance.

In contrast, the movement away from heedlessness occurs through remembrance (*dhikr*), reflection, and conscious engagement with Divine guidance. The Qur'ān states that “in the remembrance of Allāh do hearts find peace.”<sup>49</sup> Remembrance is also described as restoring vitality to the heart. The Prophet (pbuh) compared the one who remembers Allāh with the one who does not to “the living and the dead,”<sup>50</sup> highlighting the central role of remembrance in sustaining the vitality and receptivity of the heart.

Within this process, the human faculties operate in greater coherence. The *‘aql* engages in reflection on revelation and experience, the impulses of the *nafs* are moderated, and the orienting influence of the *rūḥ* becomes more clearly reflected in the state of the *qalb*. As these faculties function in greater harmony, the heart becomes increasingly receptive to guidance. Thus, the transition from heedlessness to remembrance represents a fundamental psychospiritual shift in which life becomes re-centred around *tawḥīd*.

### *Anxiety and Trust*

Another important dynamic concerns the movement between anxiety and trust. Human beings frequently encounter uncertainty, loss, and vulnerability, experiences that can give rise to apprehension and inner disturbance.<sup>51</sup> The Qur'ān acknowledges these realities, stating that human beings will be tested with “fear, hunger, and loss of wealth and lives.”<sup>52</sup> Within the Qur'ānic framework, such experiences are not understood solely as inner states but as conditions that affect orientation of the *qalb*.

When uncertainty is encountered, impulses arising from the *nafs* may incline toward fear and agitation, while the *‘aql* interprets circumstances through a pessimistic lens, anticipating possible negative outcomes. Through this interplay, the impulses of the *nafs* and the interpretations of the *‘aql* may reinforce one another, allowing the heart to become increasingly dominated by anxiety.

The Qur'ān, however, introduces the concept of *tawakkul* (trust in Allāh) as a transformative orientation that reorders this response. The Qur'ān states: “Whoever places their trust in Allāh, He is sufficient for them.”<sup>53</sup> Trust does not eliminate uncertainty; rather, it re-centres the *qalb* in recognition of Divine wisdom and providence. In this process, the reflective capacity of the *‘aql* engages with revelation, the impulses of the *nafs* are moderated, and the orienting

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<sup>49</sup> Qur'ān 13:28.

<sup>50</sup> The Prophet (pbuh) said: “The example of the one who remembers his Lord and the one who does not remember his Lord is like the example of the living and the dead.” Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, trans. M. Muhsin Khan, book 80, *ḥadīth* no. 6407, <https://sunnah.com/bukhari>.

<sup>51</sup> Rania Awaad et al., “Islamic Psychology: A Portrait of its Historical Origins and Contributions,” in *Foundations of Traditional Islamically Integrated Psychotherapy*, ed. Hooman Keshavarzi et al. (Springer, 2020).

<sup>52</sup> Qur'ān 2:155.

<sup>53</sup> Qur'ān 65:3.

influence of the *rūḥ* becomes more pronounced. As these faculties become aligned, anxiety is gradually reframed within a broader understanding of purpose and reliance on Allāh.

In this way, the movement from anxiety to trust reflects another dynamic within the human self in which the condition of the *qalb* shifts through the faculties' interaction, allowing uncertainty to be experienced within a framework of greater inner stability and spiritual orientation.

### ***Fragmentation and Alignment***

A third dynamic concerns the movement between fragmentation and alignment within the human self. Fragmentation emerges when the faculties operate without coherence. Impulses arising from the *nafs*,<sup>54</sup> interpretations formed through the *'aql*, and perception within the *qalb* may pull in different directions, generating inner conflict, confusion, or moral disorientation. In such situations, the *qalb* struggles to maintain clarity, as competing impulses and interpretations disrupt the harmony between the faculties. The Qur'ān describes this condition when it warns: "Do not be like those who forgot Allāh, so He made them forget themselves,"<sup>55</sup> indicating that disconnection from Divine remembrance results in loss of proper orientation within the self.

Alignment occurs when these faculties become oriented toward the deeper spiritual orientation inspired by the *rūḥ*. As the *nafs* undergoes purification, the *'aql* engages in reflective discernment, and the *qalb* becomes receptive to guidance, the faculties begin to operate in greater coherence. In this state, impulses, reflection, and perception reinforce rather than oppose one another, allowing the human being to experience greater integration within the self.

In Qur'ānic terms, this state of alignment is associated with inner peace and reassurance, reflected in the address to the *nafs al-muṭma'innah*: "O reassured soul, return to your Lord, pleased and pleasing."<sup>56</sup> The verse captures the culmination of this process, where the faculties have become harmonised and the heart rests in a state of stability and spiritual clarity.

These examples of the dynamics of the self are not exhaustive, but are sufficient to demonstrate that the Qur'ānic model of the human being is inherently dynamic. Human states emerge through ongoing interaction between the inner faculties. The self is therefore not defined solely by its current condition but by its capacity for movement and transformation. This perspective allows the human being to be understood as having the potential to continually develop with Divine guidance.

Conceptualising the self in this dynamic manner provides an important bridge between Qur'ānic anthropology and contemporary understandings of the human being. Within this perspective, the condition of the self emerges through interactions of the human faculties and

<sup>54</sup> Al-Qushayrī, *Al-Qushayrī's Epistle on Sufism (al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya)*, trans. Alexander D. Knysch (Garnet Publishing, 2007), 167.

<sup>55</sup> Qur'ān 59:19.

<sup>56</sup> Qur'ān 89:27–28.

their engagement with *wahy* and lived experience. This understanding forms an important foundation for the framework proposed in this article, highlighting the pathways through which transformation of the self becomes possible.

## MECHANISMS OF PSYCHOSPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION

If the Qur'ānic model of the self is inherently dynamic, as discussed in the previous section, then transformation occurs through processes that refine and direct the human faculties toward their intended purpose. The Qur'ān repeatedly points to practices and dispositions that influence the condition of the *qalb*, the centre of perception, knowledge and spiritual awareness.<sup>57</sup> Although these practices influence all the inner faculties, their integrative effect becomes manifest through the *qalb*, which functions as the central locus where impulses, reflection, and spiritual orientation converge. Ultimately, through the *qalb*, individuals recognise meaning, interpret experience, and orient themselves toward Divine guidance. Transformation therefore occurs as the *qalb* becomes increasingly receptive to guidance, enabling movement from states of imbalance toward greater alignment within the self. Through this process, the human being gradually develops *taqwā*, a concept that will be explored more fully in the teleological orientation of the model.

Within the framework proposed here, these practices may be understood as mechanisms of psychospiritual transformation. Through them, the impulses of the *nafs*, reflections of the *'aql*, and orienting influence of the *rūḥ* are gradually brought into greater harmony through the *qalb*. Although these faculties perform distinct roles, the practices described in the Qur'ān influence them collectively, shaping the dynamics of the inner life and guiding the self toward greater coherence, a theme widely discussed in classical works of Islamic spirituality.<sup>58</sup>

Rather than viewing these practices solely as moral virtues or devotional acts, they may also be understood as processes that cultivate alignment and gradually reshape the orientation of the self. The Qur'ān frequently links such practices to shifts in human states, patterns of reflection, and perceptions of meaning, all of which influence human wellbeing. In this sense, these mechanisms operate at the foundations of a psychospiritual life, shaping how individuals interpret experience, regulate their responses, and navigate life's uncertainties.

The Qur'ān highlights several practices that contribute to this transformation process, including *dhikr* (remembrance), *tawakkul* (trust), *ṣabr* (patience), *shukr* (gratitude), and *du'ā'* (supplication). Within the QALB model, these practices are mechanisms through which the faculties are gradually brought into greater harmony through the *qalb*. The following sections illustrate how these Qur'ānic practices operate within this framework.

<sup>57</sup> For example, Qur'ān 22:46 and 26:88–89.

<sup>58</sup> Al-Qushayrī, *Al-Qushayri's Epistle on Sufism*; Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*.

### ***Dhikr: Re-centering the Qalb***

*Dhikr* (remembrance of Allāh) is a central mechanism through which the inner life is re-centred. The Qur'ān states: “Verily, in the remembrance of Allāh do hearts find peace.”<sup>59</sup> This verse highlights the role of remembrance in restoring stability within the human being by influencing the condition of the *qalb*. The Qur'ān also commands believers to engage in frequent remembrance, emphasising its central role in spiritual life.<sup>60</sup>

Within the QALB model, *dhikr* influences the dynamics of the entire inner system. By directing attention toward Allāh, remembrance shapes the reflections of the *'aql*, reminding the intellect of Divine reality and ultimate purpose. At the same time, it humbles the impulses of the *nafs*, tempering tendencies toward distraction, arrogance, or excess, while resonating with the *rūh* by reconnecting the human being with the Divine source from which it originates.

Through these influences, remembrance stabilises the *qalb* and reorients the human being toward Divine guidance. As the faculties come into greater harmony through the heart, individuals regain inner coherence and focus. In this way, *dhikr* is a mechanism of psychospiritual transformation that restores balance within the self, cultivating *taqwā* and drawing the heart toward *tuma'nīnah*.

### ***Tawakkul: Trust and Reorientation of the Heart***

Human life is characterised by uncertainty, vulnerability, and events beyond individual control. The Qur'ānic concept of *tawakkul* (trust in Allāh) provides a framework through which these realities can be understood. The Qur'ān states: “Whoever places their trust in Allāh, He is sufficient for them.”<sup>61</sup> This verse emphasises that trust is not merely an emotional state but a disposition that orients the human being toward reliance on Divine wisdom and care.

Within the QALB model, *tawakkul* reorients the *qalb* in the face of uncertainty. By placing trust in Allāh, the reflections of the *'aql* interpret circumstances within a broader awareness of Divine wisdom and providence, while the impulses of the *nafs* are tempered by humility and acceptance. At the same time, trust resonates with the *rūh*, strengthening the individual's awareness of Divine guidance.

Through this orientation of reliance on Allāh, *tawakkul* stabilises the *qalb*, enabling individuals to approach uncertainty with composure and confidence in Divine providence. In doing so, it strengthens *taqwā* and facilitates the emergence of *tuma'nīnah*.

### ***Ṣabr: Steadfastness and Stability of the Heart***

The Qur'ān repeatedly emphasises the importance of *ṣabr* (patience or steadfastness), particularly in the face of hardship and difficulty: “O you who believe, seek help through

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<sup>59</sup> Qur'ān 13:28.

<sup>60</sup> Qur'ān 33:41.

<sup>61</sup> Qur'ān 65:3.

patience and prayer. Indeed, Allāh is with the patient.”<sup>62</sup> While often translated simply as patience, *ṣabr* encompasses a broader capacity for endurance, restraint, and perseverance in the face of adversity.

Within the QALB model, *ṣabr* preserves the heart’s stability during times of difficulty. Through steadfastness, the impulses of the *nafs* are restrained from reactive or impulsive responses, while the reflections of the *‘aql* remain anchored in awareness of purpose and accountability. At the same time, the *rūḥ* is strengthened through continued reliance on Divine support.

In this way, *ṣabr* sustains the coherence of the inner faculties through the *qalb*, enabling individuals to endure hardship without losing their moral and spiritual orientation. Through this stability of the heart, *ṣabr* cultivates *taqwā*, enabling the human being to move toward the state of *ṭuma`nīnah*.

### ***Shukr: Gratitude and Orientation of the Heart Toward Blessings***

The Qur’ānic concept of *shukr* (gratitude) plays a central role in shaping how individuals perceive and interpret their circumstances. The Qur’ān repeatedly calls believers to recognise the blessings present in their lives, declaring: “If you are grateful, I will surely increase you.”<sup>63</sup>

Within the QALB model, *shukr* orients the heart toward recognition of Divine provision. Through *shukr*, the reflections of the *‘aql* become attentive to signs of blessing and meaning within everyday experience, while the impulses of the *nafs* are moderated by humility and appreciation. *Shukr* also resonates with the *rūḥ*, reinforcing awareness of the Divine source from which all provision flows.

Through these influences, *shukr* strengthens the orientation of the *qalb* toward recognition of Divine blessings, cultivating contentment and appreciation. In doing so, it nurtures *taqwā* and supports the movement of the heart toward the state of *ṭuma`nīnah*.

### ***Du‘ā’: Turning the Heart Toward Allāh***

*Du‘ā’* represents a deeply relational dimension of the Qur’ānic understanding of the human being. The Qur’ān emphasises the nearness of Allāh to those who call on Him: “When My servants ask you about Me, I am indeed near. I respond to the call of the one who calls upon Me.”<sup>64</sup>

Within the QALB model, *du‘ā’* is a mechanism through which the heart turns directly toward Allāh. Through *du‘ā’*, individuals articulate their needs, concerns, hopes, and struggles while reaffirming their dependence on Divine guidance. This act influences the entire system of faculties: the attention of the *‘aql* is directed toward reliance on Allāh beyond merely worldly

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<sup>62</sup> Qur’ān 2:153

<sup>63</sup> Qur’ān 14:7.

<sup>64</sup> Qur’ān 2:186.

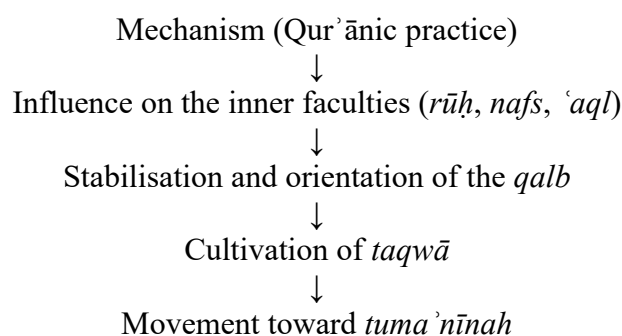
causes, the impulses of the *nafs* are softened through humility and vulnerability before Allāh, and the *rūḥ* is nourished through renewed awareness of the Divine presence.

In this way, *du‘ā* restores orientation of the *qalb*, strengthening the relationship between the human being and the Divine source of guidance. Turning toward Allāh cultivates *taqwā* and supports the movement of the heart toward the state of *ṭuma‘nīnah*.

### Summary

Together, these mechanisms, along with others emphasised in the Qur’ān, illustrate how spiritual practices influence the dynamics of the self. Through practices such as *dhikr*, *tawakkul*, *ṣabr*, *shukr*, and *du‘ā*, the human faculties are gradually brought into greater harmony, which becomes manifest in the *qalb*. These practices reshape patterns of reflection, regulate responses to experience, and develop greater coherence between the *nafs*, *‘aql*, and *rūḥ*, with this integration expressed through the *qalb*.

Within the QALB model, this process may be understood as a sequence of psychospiritual transformation:



Through this process, the *qalb* becomes increasingly aligned with Divine guidance, enabling the human being to develop a state of God-consciousness (*taqwā*) that gives rise to inner coherence and peace.

### TELEOLOGY: THE AIM OF THE HUMAN BEING

In many contemporary psychological models, wellbeing is often conceptualised in terms of subjective satisfaction, emotional balance, or reduction of distress.<sup>65</sup> Within the Qur’ānic worldview, the aim of the human being extends beyond these parameters. Human flourishing is understood primarily in terms of alignment with Divine guidance and orientation of the heart toward Allāh.<sup>66</sup> Emotional and psychological wellbeing are therefore not ends in themselves but emerge as consequences of deeper alignment with the Divine purpose.

Within this perspective, cultivation of *taqwā* represents an important orientation of the human being toward Allāh. The Qur’ān repeatedly describes *taqwā* as the defining quality of

<sup>65</sup> Ed Diener et al., “Advances in Subjective Well-Being Research,” *Nature Human Behaviour* 2 (2018): 253–54.

<sup>66</sup> Qur’ān 51:56; Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, *The Vision of Islam* (I.B. Tauris, 1994), 24.

those who remain attentive to Divine guidance and mindful of their relationship with Allāh.<sup>67</sup> In this sense, *taqwā* reflects a disposition of the *qalb* in which the impulses of the *nafs*, reflections of the *'aql*, and orienting influence of the *rūh* are increasingly guided by awareness of Allāh. Ultimately, *taqwā* involves guarding the heart through attentiveness to Allāh.<sup>68</sup> The Prophet (pbuh) also emphasised the heart's centrality in relation to *taqwā*, stating, "Taqwā is here," while pointing to his chest.<sup>69</sup> Through this orientation, the heart becomes more receptive to Divine guidance and more capable of maintaining coherence among the inner faculties.

One of the most significant expressions of this alignment is the Qur'ānic concept of *ṭuma'nīnah*, often translated as tranquillity or inner peace. The Qur'ān links this inner serenity to remembrance of Allāh, stating: "Verily, in the remembrance of Allāh do hearts find peace."<sup>70</sup> Through *dhikr*, the heart becomes increasingly oriented toward Allāh, allowing the inner faculties to move toward greater harmony. The Qur'ān describes the culmination of this process in the state of the *nafs al-muṭma'innah* (soul at peace), addressed by Allāh: "O reassured soul, return to your Lord, pleased and pleasing."<sup>71</sup> This state represents a condition in which the faculties have achieved coherence through the *qalb* and are oriented toward Divine guidance. The inner peace described here is therefore not merely emotional calm but a deeper spiritual stability grounded in a sustained relationship with Allāh.

Within the QALB model, the mechanisms of transformation described in the previous section gradually cultivate this state. Through practices such as remembrance (*dhikr*), trust (*tawakkul*), patience (*ṣabr*), gratitude (*shukr*), and supplication (*du'ā'*), the faculties are brought into greater coherence through the *qalb*. As the heart becomes increasingly aligned with Divine guidance, the individual develops a sustained awareness of Allāh that shapes perception, intention, and action. In this way, *taqwā* represents the orientation of the heart toward Allāh, while *ṭuma'nīnah* reflects the inner peace that emerges from this alignment.

This teleological perspective distinguishes the Qur'ānic understanding of wellbeing from many contemporary secular models of mental health. While modern psychological frameworks often emphasise hedonic wellbeing such as pleasure, happiness, or life satisfaction, the Qur'ānic model emphasises alignment with spiritual purpose. Inner peace emerges not simply from management of emotional states but from living in accordance with Divine guidance.

This perspective does not imply that emotional wellbeing is unimportant. Rather, it situates wellbeing within a broader framework of meaning in which emotional states are connected to spiritual awareness and the ultimate purpose of human existence. Within this framework, the aim of the human being is not simply to minimise suffering or maximise pleasure, but to cultivate a heart oriented toward God-consciousness that enables the individual to return to Allāh in a state of peace.

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<sup>67</sup> Qur'ān 2:2; 49:13.

<sup>68</sup> Qushayrī, *Al-Qushayrī's Epistle on Sufism*, 125.

<sup>69</sup> Abū al-Ḥusayn Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, trans. Abdul Hamid Siddiqui, book 45, *ḥadīth* no. 2564a, <https://sunnah.com/muslim>.

<sup>70</sup> Qur'ān 13:28.

<sup>71</sup> Qur'ān 89:27–28.

## DISCUSSION: POSITIONING THE FRAMEWORK

The framework proposed in this study contributes to ongoing conversations within the emerging field of Islamic psychology by addressing a recurring challenge within the literature: conceptual fragmentation. As discussed in earlier sections, contemporary efforts to develop Islamic approaches to psychology have taken several important directions, including the Islamisation of psychology, integrative models that incorporate Islamic concepts into therapeutic frameworks, and renewed engagement with the classical Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāth*). Each approach has made valuable contributions to the field. At the same time, the literature often reflects a lack of conceptual cohesion, with different models emphasising aspects of Islamic thought without situating them within a comprehensive anthropological and epistemological framework.

The Qur'ān-centred framework presented here responds to this challenge by articulating a more integrated model of the human being grounded in the Qur'ānic worldview. Rather than beginning from existing psychological theories or selectively drawing on individual concepts, the framework begins from the epistemological foundation of revelation (*wahy*) and develops a model of the human being rooted in Qur'ānic anthropology.

Within this framework, several interrelated dimensions form the basis of a coherent psychospiritual model. First, the framework establishes an epistemological foundation in which revelation is the primary source of knowledge regarding the human being's nature and the dynamics of inner life. This epistemic orientation does not reject empirical psychological enquiry but situates it within a broader hierarchy of knowledge in which Qur'ānic guidance provides an interpretive lens through which psychological phenomena may be understood.

Second, the framework offers an ontological account of the human being grounded in Qur'ānic anthropology. By conceptualising the self through the interrelated faculties of the *rūḥ*, *qalb*, *nafs*, and *'aql*, the model provides structured understanding of the inner dimensions of human experience that integrates cognitive, emotional, and spiritual dimensions. Within this configuration, the *qalb* is the centre of perception, knowledge, and spiritual awareness through which the impulses of the *nafs*, reflections of the *'aql*, and orienting influence of the *rūḥ* are integrated and directed.

Third, the framework conceptualises the inner life of the human being as inherently dynamic. Human states are not treated as fixed dispositions but as inner movements that emerge through the interaction of the faculties and the individual's responsiveness to Divine guidance. This dynamic perspective allows for a more nuanced understanding of how individuals move between states such as heedlessness and awareness, anxiety and trust, or fragmentation and inner coherence.

Fourth, the framework identifies mechanisms of psychospiritual transformation through which these movements occur. Practices emphasised in the Qur'ān such as *dhikr*, *tawakkul*, *ṣabr*, *shukr*, and *du'ā'* are conceptualised not only as spiritual virtues but as processes that influence the dynamics of the inner faculties. Through these mechanisms, the impulses of the *nafs*, reflections of the *'aql*, and orienting influence of the *rūḥ* are gradually brought into greater

harmony within the *qalb*, shaping patterns of perception, response, and orientation toward Divine guidance.

Finally, the framework articulates a teleological orientation that situates human wellbeing within the broader purpose of existence. Within the QALB model, cultivation of *taqwā* represents the human being's orientation toward Divine guidance. As the faculties become increasingly aligned within the *qalb*, this orientation gives rise to the state described in the Qur'ān as *ṭuma'nīnah*, a condition of inner peace reflecting harmony among the inner faculties and alignment with Divine guidance.

Taken together, these elements of epistemology, ontology, dynamic process, mechanisms of transformation, and teleological orientation form a coherent conceptual architecture for understanding the human being within a Qur'ānic framework. In this sense, the QALB model is a structured framework that systematically integrates these dimensions into a unified account of the human being. By articulating the relationships between revelation, human faculties, practices of transformation, and the aim of the self, the model offers a Qur'ān-centred conceptual structure that can be a foundation for future theoretical, empirical, and clinical developments within Islamic psychology.

As a conceptual study, this framework has scope limitations. The QALB model is derived primarily through interpretive engagement with Qur'ānic concepts and represents one possible articulation of the relationships between the faculties of the human self. While the model draws on insights from the broader Islamic intellectual tradition, it does not provide a comprehensive synthesis of the extensive discussions of the self found across the Islamic scholarly heritage. In addition, the framework is presented as a theoretical model rather than an empirically tested structure. Future research may explore how the relationships between the faculties outlined here can be examined through empirical study, clinical application, and continued engagement with the wider Islamic scholarly tradition.

## CONCLUSION

Taken together, the QALB model proposes a Qur'ānic understanding of the human being in which transformation occurs through dynamic interaction of the inner faculties. The impulses and desires of the *nafs*, reflections and rational discernment of the *'aql*, and Divine orienting function of the *rūḥ* are gradually brought into greater harmony within the *qalb*, the centre of perception, understanding, and spiritual awareness. Through practices emphasised in the Qur'ān, such as remembrance (*dhikr*), trust (*tawakkul*), patience (*ṣabr*), gratitude (*shukr*), and supplication (*du'ā'*), the heart becomes increasingly aligned with Divine guidance. This alignment cultivates *taqwā*, a state of God-conscious awareness, from which emerges the inner peace described in the Qur'ān as *ṭuma'nīnah*. In this way, the QALB model offers a framework through which the processes of psychospiritual transformation, orientation of the self, and the ultimate aim of human life may be understood within a coherent Qur'ānic anthropology. As such, the model provides a conceptual foundation that may inform future theoretical, empirical, and clinical developments within the study of Islamic psychospirituality.



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