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## *The Sciences of Behavior* (‘Ulum al-mu‘amala)

**T**he *Sciences of Behavior* was written sometime between 1780 and 1785, in a period when the shehu and his growing circle of disciples were developing more elaborate and detailed teaching on the practical elements of the faith and how to pair them with the cultivation of excellent character. While *The Sciences of Behavior* by Dan Fodio is clearly not a commentary on Ghazali’s *The Revival of the Sciences of Religion*, the latter work is one of the principal sources that Dan Fodio engages in writing on ethical comportment.

The shehu’s text is organized according to the structure of the famous Hadith of Gabriel, wherein the Prophet Muhammad and many of his most illustrious disciples are visited by what appears to be a stranger who asks about *islam* (submission), *iman* (faith), and *ihsan* (spiritual excellence). Sitting knee to knee with this stranger, the Prophet answers his questions, and the companions are astonished that having questioned him, the man had the nerve to confirm his answers by saying, “you have spoken truth.” When the stranger left, the Prophet revealed to his companions that the visitor was none other than the Angel Gabriel himself, transmitter of the Qur’an. The report contains a concise summary of the basics of practice (*islam*) and belief (*iman*), and it is often used to structure teaching on the contents of the religion. Sufis often focus on the Prophet’s definition of *ihsan*: “it is to worship God as though you see Him, for if you do not see Him, know that He sees you.” Here we have reproduced only the section on *Ihsan*, since the sections on *Iman* are similar to the contents of the *Kitab usul al-din*, while the sections on *Islam* enter into minute details about daily worshipping activities.

#### **Ihsan: The science of *tasawwuf* (Sufism)**

Every responsible person must learn enough of this science to enable him to acquire praiseworthy qualities and to keep him from blameworthy qualities.

*The purification of the heart from the whisperings of Shaytan*

This is achieved by four things: The first is to seek refuge with God from shaytan, and to reject the thought which occurs. The second is to remember God with the heart and the tongue. The third is to reflect on the proofs of the people of the sunna. These are not mentioned by the philosophers or the *Mu'tazalis*. The fourth is to question one who knows the sunna.

*The purification of the heart from conceit ('ujb)*

Conceit is one of the blameworthy qualities which it is forbidden to have. God Most High said, "*Do not praise yourselves. He has more knowledge of the one who guards himself out of fear*" (Q 53:32).

Much harm arises out of conceit. Conceit leads to pride, forgetting wrong actions, presumption about acts of worship (*'ibada*), forgetting the blessing of God, self-deception, feeling safe from the anger of God, believing that you have a station with God, and self-justification by action, concept, and knowledge. These and things like them are part of the harm which results from conceit.

As far as its reality is concerned, you should know that without a doubt, conceit is due to an attribute of perfection. A man may have one of two states in his self-perfection of knowledge and *'ibada*.

One state is that he is fearful that what he has obtained will vanish, be uprooted, and stripped away from him. This person is not conceited. The other state is that he is not fearful that it will vanish. He is happy about it because it is a blessing from God, not because it is related to himself. He also is not conceited. There is, however, a third state which is conceit. This is that he does not fear for what he has. He is happy with it, sure of it. His joy in it is because it is a perfection and a blessing, not because it is a gift from God Most High. His joy in it is because it is his attribute and it is attributed to him. His joy is not because it is related to God since it comes from Him. Conceit is presumption about blessing, relying on it, and forgetting its relationship to the Giver of blessing. This makes clear the reality of conceit.

As far as its cure is concerned, know that the cure for every fault is its opposite. The fault of conceit lies in pure ignorance. Its cure is recognition and knowledge which is in direct opposition to that ignorance. A man's conceit is in two categories: one category is in whatever he can exercise his own choice in—like the prayer, fasting, *zakat*, *hajj*, *sadaqa*, raiding, and improving his character. Conceit in this category is more prevalent. There is also a category in which he has no choice—like beauty, power, and lineage.

Sometimes he is conceited in both of these categories because he possesses these things and is their place of manifestation. This is pure ignorance because the place is subservient and cannot be part of bringing-into-existence. How then can he be conceited about something which is not his? On the other hand, he may be conceited because the *‘ibada* has been obtained by his own power which is in-time. This is also pure ignorance. He must then consider his power and all the causes by which he has it. He acts as if it belonged to him. However, it is all God’s blessing to him and he has no inherent right to it. He ought to be delighted about the generosity of God Most High since He showered Him with what he did not deserve and bestowed it on him, preferring him above others without any prior reason or any device on his part. The truth is that you, your movements, and all of your attributes are part of God’s creation and invention. You did not act when you acted, and you did not pray when you prayed, and *‘you did not throw when you threw. Allah threw’* (Q 17:82). Therefore, the worshipper’s conceit about his *‘ibada* has no meaning. It is the same with the beautiful person’s conceit about his beauty, and the conceit of the wealthy man about his riches and liberality. You suppose that the action is achieved by your own power, but where does your power come from? Action is only possible by your existence and by the existence of your knowledge, will, power, and the rest of the causes of your actions. All that is from God, not from you because He is the One who created power and then gave power to the will, set causes in motion, distributed obstacles, and facilitated action. One of the marvels is that you can be conceited about yourself, and yet you do not wonder at the generosity of God. You should be constantly concerned about yourself and your opinion because He is not impressed by opinion unless there is evidence for it, and it is conclusively contained in the Book of God or in the sunna of God’s Messenger, or by an intellectual proof. This makes clear the cure of conceit.

*The purification of the heart from pride (kibr)*

Pride is one of the blameworthy qualities and it is forbidden to have it. God Most High said, *“I will turn away from My signs those who are arrogant in the earth without right”* (Q 7:146).

As far as its reality is concerned, you should know that pride is divided into inward and outward pride. Inward pride is a quality within the self, and outward pride is action which appears through the limbs. The name pride (*kibr*) is more appropriate for the inward quality. As for action, it is the result of that quality, and you must know that the quality of pride demands action. When

it appears on the limbs, it is called arrogance (*takabbur*), and when it does not manifest itself, it is called pride (*kibr*). Its root is the quality in the self which is satisfaction and confidence at seeing the self above anyone towards whom he is overbearing. Mere self-exaltation does not make someone arrogant. He might well exalt himself while seeing that another person is greater than him or his equal. In this case, he is not overbearing toward him. It is not enough merely to disdain others. In spite of his disdain, a person might see himself as more despicable and therefore, he would not be considered arrogant. If someone sees the other as his equal, he is not considered arrogant. He must see that he has a rank and someone else has a rank, and then see his rank as above the other's rank. When he exalts his own value in relationship to someone else, he despises the one below him and puts himself above the other's company and confidence. If it is very extreme, he may spurn the other's service and not consider him worthy to stand in his presence. If it is less extreme, he may reject his basic equality, and put himself above this other in assemblies, wait for him to begin the greeting, think that it is unlikely that he will be able to fulfil his demands and be amazed at him. If he objects, the proud man scorns to answer him. If he warns him, he refuses to accept it. If he answers him back, he is angry. When the proud man teaches, he is not courteous to his students. He looks down upon them and rebuffs them. He is very condescending toward them and exploits them. He looks at the common people as if he were looking at asses. He thinks that they are ignorant and despicable.

There are many actions which come from the quality of pride. They are too many to be numbered. This is the reality of pride.

The harm it does is immense. The "ulama" [community of Islamic scholars] can help you but little against it, let alone the common people. How could its harm be other than great when it comes between a man and all the qualities of the believers? Those qualities are the doors of the Garden. Pride locks all those doors because it is impossible for him to want for the believers what he wants for himself while there is anything of self-importance in him. It is impossible for him to have humility—and humility is the beginning of the qualities of those who guard themselves out of fear of God—while there is any self-importance in him. It is impossible for him to remain truthful while there is self-importance in him. It is impossible for him to abandon envy while there is self-importance in him. It is impossible for him to abandon anger while there is self-importance in him. It is impossible for him to contain rancour while there is self-importance in him. It is impossible for him to offer friendly good counsel while there is self-importance in him. It is impossible

for him to accept good counsel while there is self-importance in him. He is not safe from the contempt and slander of others while there is self-importance. There is no praiseworthy quality but that he is incapable of it from the fear that his self-importance will slip away from him.

As far as its cure is concerned, there are two parts: the knowledge-cure and the action-cure. The remedy can only be effected by joining the two of them. The knowledge-cure is to know and recognise yourself and to know and recognize your Lord. That will be enough to remove your pride. Whoever knows and recognizes his own self as it should be known and recognised, knows that it is not worthy of greatness, and that true greatness and pride are only for God. As for gnosis of his Lord and His glory, it is too lengthy a subject for us to discuss here, and it is the goal of the knowledge of unveiling.

Self-recognition is also a lengthy subject. However, we will mention what will help you towards humility and submissiveness. It is enough for you to recognize one verse (*aya*) of the Book of God. The knowledge of the first and the last is in the Qur’an for whoever has his inner eye open. God Most High said, *“Perish man! How thankless he is! Of what did He create him? Of a sperm-drop. He created him, and determined him, and then made the way easy for him. Then He makes him die, buries him, and then, when He wills, raises him”* (Q 80:17–22).

This verse points to the beginning of man’s creation, his end, and his middle. Let a man look at that if he desires to understand its meaning.

As for the beginning of man, he was “a thing unremembered.” He was concealed in non-existence. Non-existence has no beginning. What is lower and meaner than obliteration and non-existence? He was in non-existence. Then God created him from the basest of things, and then from the most unclean thing. He created him from earth and then from a sperm-drop, then a blood-clot, then a lump of flesh. Then He made the flesh bones, and then clothed the bones in flesh. This was the beginning of his existence and then he became a thing remembered. He was a thing unremembered by reason of having the lowest of qualities and attributes since at his beginning, he was not created perfect. He was created inanimate, dead. He neither heard, saw, felt, moved, spoke, touched, perceived, or knew. He began by his death before his life, by weakness before strength, by ignorance before knowledge, by blindness before sight, by deafness before hearing, by dumbness before speech, by misguidance before guidance, by poverty before wealth, and by incapacity before capacity.

This is the meaning of His word, *“From what did He create him? And determined him”* (Q 80:18), and the meaning of His word, *“Has there come upon man*

*a period of time when he was a thing unremembered? We created him of a sperm-drop, a mingling, trying him. We made him hearing, seeing. We guided him upon the way, whether he is thankful or unthankful”* (Q 76:1–3).

He created him like that at the beginning. Then He was gracious to him and said, *“We made the way easy for him.”* This indicates what He wills for him during the period from life to death. Similarly, He said, *“of a sperm-drop, a mingling, trying him. We made him hearing, seeing. We guided him on the way”* (Q 76:2–3). The meaning here is that he gave him life after he was inanimate and dead, first from the earth, and then from a sperm-drop. He gave him hearing after he was deaf and He gave him sight after he lacked sight. He gave him strength after weakness and knowledge after ignorance. He created his limbs for him with all they contain of marvels and signs after he lacked them. He enriched him after poverty, made him full after hunger, clothed him after nakedness, and guided him after misguidance. Look how He directed him and formed him. Look at how He made the way easy for him. Look at man’s overstepping and at how thankless he is. Look at man’s ignorance and how he shows it.

God Most High said, *“Part of His sign is that He created you from earth”* (Q 30:20). He created man from humble earth and unclean sperm after pure non-existence so that he would recognize the baseness of his essence and thereby recognize himself. He perfected the sperm-drop for him so that he would recognize his Lord by it and know His immensity and majesty by it, and that He is the only one worthy of true greatness and pride. For that reason, He described him and said, *“Have We not given him two eyes and a tongue and two lips, and guided him on the two roads?”* (Q 90:8–10).

He first acquainted him with his baseness and said, *“Was he not a sperm-drop extracted?”* (Q 75:37). Then he was a blood-clot. Then He mentioned His favour and said, *“He created and fashioned and made a pair from it, male and female”* (Q 75:38–39), in order to perpetuate his existence by reproduction as his existence was acquired in the beginning by original formation. When you begin in this manner and your states are like this, how can you have arrogance, pride, glory, and conceit? Properly speaking, man is the lowest of the low and the weakest of the weak. Indeed, even if He had perfected him, delegated His command to him and made his existence go on by his own choice, he would still dare to be insolent and would forget his beginning and his end. However, during your existence, He has given illnesses power over you, whether you like it or not, and whether you are content or enraged. You become hungry and thirsty without being able to do anything about it. You

do not possess any power to bring either harm or benefit. You want to know something but you remain ignorant of it. You want to remember something and yet you forget it. You want to not forget something and yet you do forget it. You want to direct your heart to what concerns it and yet you are caught up in the valleys of whisperings and thoughts. You own neither your heart nor yourself. You desire something while your destruction may be in it, and you detest something while your life may be in it. You find some foods delicious when they destroy and kill you, and you find remedies repugnant when they help you and save you. You are not safe for a moment, day or night. Your sight, knowledge, and power may be stripped away, your limbs may become semi-paralysed, your intellect may be stolen away, your *ruh* may be snatched away, and all that you love in this world may be taken from you. You are hard-pressed, abased. If you are left alone, you go on. If you are snatched away, you are annihilated. A mere slave. A chattel. You have no power over yourself or anyone else. What can be more abased? If you recognize yourself, how can you think yourself worthy of pride? If it were not for your ignorance—and this is your immediate state—you would reflect on it. Your end is death. It is indicated by His word, “*Then He makes him die and buries him. Then, when He wills, He raises him*” (Q 80: 21–22). The meaning here is that your *ruh*, hearing, sight, knowledge, power, senses, perception, and movement are all stripped away. You revert to the inanimate as you were in the first place. Only the shape of your limbs remains. Your form has neither senses nor movement. Then you are placed in the earth and your limbs decay. You become absent after you existed. You become as if you were not, as you were at first for a long period of time.

Then a man wishes that he could remain like that. How excellent it would be if he were left as dust! However, after a long time, He brings him back to life to subject him to a severe trial. He comes out of his grave after his separated parts are joined together, and he steps out to the terrors of the Rising. He is told, “Come quickly to the Reckoning and prepare for the Outcome!” His heart stops in fear and panic when he is faced with the terror of these words even before his pages are spread out and he sees his shameful actions in them. This is the end of his affair. It is the meaning of His word, “*Then when He wishes, He raises him*” (Q 80:22).

How can anyone whose state this is be arrogant? A moment of freedom from grief is better than arrogance. He has shown the beginning and the middle of his condition. If his end had appeared to him—and we seek refuge from God—perhaps he would have chosen to be a dog or a pig in order

to become dust with the animals rather than a hearing, speaking man, and meet with punishment (if he deserves the Fire). When he is in the presence of God then even the pig is nobler than him since it reverts to dust and it is spared from the Reckoning and the punishment. Someone with this state at the Rising can only hope for pardon, and he cannot be at all certain about it. How then can he be arrogant? How can he see himself as anything to which excellence is attached? This is the knowledge-cure.

As far as the action-cure is concerned, it is to humble yourself to people in a constrained unnatural manner until it becomes natural for you.

*The purification of the heart from false hope (amal)*

False hope is one of the blameworthy qualities which it is forbidden to have. God Most High said, “*Leave them eating and enjoying themselves. False hope diverts them from the outrage which they do*” (Q 15:3).

Its reality is that your life-energy is directed to the moment, and you let things slide.

Its cure is to know that throughout your life, false hope will prevent you from hastening to repentance (*tawba*). You say, “I will yet turn in *tawba*. There are still many days ahead.” It also prevents you from hastening to obedience. You say, “I will act later. I still have many days left.” That continues to harden your heart because you do not remember death and the grave.

*The purification of the heart from anger (ghadab) without grounds*

Anger is one of the blameworthy qualities which it is forbidden to have. God Most High said, “*When He put rage into the hearts of those who reject*” (Q 48:26). The rage of the *Jahiliya* (Age of rash ignorance, before Islam) was from anger without grounds. He praised the *believers* since He bestowed some of the *sakina* (tranquillity) on them.

The reality of anger is the boiling of the blood of the heart to seek revenge. If a man is angry at someone below him, the blood expands and rises to his face and makes it red. If he is angry with someone above him, the blood contracts from his outer skin to his heart, and it becomes sorrow. For that reason, he becomes pale. If he is uncertain, the blood is between contraction and expansion.

There are three degrees of anger: Insufficient (*tafrit*); Excessive (*ifrat*); and Moderate (*i'tidal*). Insufficient anger is blameworthy because you are not angry enough to protest in defense of that which is sacred (*haram*): with respect to your wife or mother, for example, or if you should have no jealous

protectionism at all. Jealousy was created as a protection for man. Part of this failing is to be silent when you see objectionable actions. Part of it is also to be incapable of self-discipline, since self-discipline is made effective by bringing anger to bear on the appetite, even to the extent of being angry at yourself when it inclines to base appetites. Lack of anger is therefore blameworthy.

Excessive anger is also blameworthy. It is to be overcome by anger so that cool water goes out of the management of the intellect and the religion (*din*), and you no longer have insight, consideration, reflection, or choice. Whenever the fire of anger is intense, it will blind the one who is angry, and it will make you deaf to every warning. It may increase until anger invades the roots of the senses to the extent that you cannot even see with your eye. The entire world may become dark for you. Indeed, the fire of anger may become so intense that it burns up the moisture which gives life to the heart. The angry person then dies of rage.

Among the outward effects of excessive anger are: Change of colour, intense shaking in the extremities, confused speech, foam appearing at the corners of the mouth, redness, and an ugly mien. This is the effect of anger on the body.

As far as its effects on the tongue are concerned, it is that you speak with insulting language, obscenity, and ugly words which rational people are ashamed to use. Someone who utters them in anger is ashamed of them after his anger has abated. These are the effects of excessive anger on the tongue.

Its effect on the limbs is that you strike, tear, kill, and wound if you are in a position to do so, without any consideration. If the object of your anger flies from you, your own anger turns against you yourself, so you tear your own garments and slap your own face. You may hit your hand on the ground and completely go beyond the overwhelmed drunkard. You may fall down quickly and not be able to run or stand up through the intensity of your anger. It may come upon you like a fainting spell. You may hit animals and smash a bowl to the ground, and act like a madman. You verbally abuse the beast and speak to it, saying, "How long can I endure this from you?" as if you were addressing a rational being. These are the effects of excessive anger on the limbs.

Its effect on the heart is resentment, envy, concealing evil, resolving to divulge secrets, and other ugly things. This is the effect of excessive anger on the heart.

Praiseworthy anger is in moderation. It is the anger which waits for the indication of the intellect and the religion. It arises when it is praised by the shari‘a, and it stops when it is *criticised* by the shari‘a. It is the middle way

which the Messenger of God—may God bless him and grant him peace—described when he said, “The best of affairs is their middle.”

Whoever has insufficient anger must treat himself until his anger becomes stronger. Whoever lets his anger go to excess must treat himself until both of them return to the middle way between the two extremes. That is the Straight Path.

The cure of anger consists of six things: The first is to reflect on the virtues of restraining rancour, and to desire the reward for doing that. The second is to frighten yourself with the punishment of God, saying “The power of God over me is greater than my power over this man. If I carry out my anger against him, then what security will I have against the anger of God on the Day of Rising?” The third is to reflect and make yourself fear the results of anger in this world if you have no fear of the next world. The fourth is to reflect on the ugliness of your form when you are angry. Then you will remember someone else’s form during his anger. Reflect as well on how much you resemble the mad dog when you abandon self-restraint, and how much you resemble the saints (*awliya*) when you abandon your anger. The fifth is to reflect on the cause which summons you to revenge. It must be the words of shaytan to you, “This is incapacity and humiliation for you in the eyes of people.” You must reflect since you are more insignificant with God, the angels, and the Prophets. Why then are you concerned with people? The sixth is to know that your anger arises from your amazement at something which is acting in conformity with the will of God. It is almost as if God’s anger with you is greater than your own anger.

This ends the knowledge-cure.

As far as the action-cure is concerned, it is to say when you are angry, “I seek refuge with God from the accursed shaytan.” If you are standing, then sit down. If you are sitting, then lie down, and make the lesser or the full ablution (*wudu* or *ghusl*).

*The purification of the heart from envy (hasad)*

Envy is one of the blameworthy qualities which it is forbidden to have. God Most High said, “Do they then envy people for what God has given them?” (Q 4:54).

As for its reality, you should know that there is only envy for a blessing. When God bestows a blessing on your brother, it can lead to one of two states in you. One is that you hate that blessing and want it to leave him. This state is called envy. The definition of envy is hating blessing and wanting it to depart from the one who has received it. The second state is that you do not want it to leave him and do not dislike the fact that it exists and

remains with him, but you desire the like of it for yourself. This is called thinking someone enviable. Envy is anger at the fact that God prefers some of His slaves over others.

There are four levels of envy: The first is to want the blessing to leave him. If that happens, you do not want it to return to him. This is the very limit of malice. The second is to want the blessing to leave him in the same way that you desire a fine house, a beautiful woman, or a lofty, wide sufi lodge (*zawiyya*) which someone else has obtained and which you want for yourself. Your aim is not to remove that blessing. You hate the absence of the blessing, not that it has been bestowed on someone else. The third is not to desire the blessing itself, but to desire its like for yourself. If you cannot have its like, you want it to leave the person who has it so that the contrast between you will not be apparent. The fourth is to desire its like for yourself. If you do not obtain it, you do not desire that it depart from the person who has it. This last level is excused if it is about this world, and it is recommended if it is about the religion.

As far as the remedy of envy is concerned, you should know that envy is one of the serious sicknesses of the heart. The sickness of the heart can only be treated by knowledge and action. Useful knowledge concerning the sickness of envy is to really recognize that envy is harmful to you, both in your religion and in this world. There is no harm for one who is envied, either in this world or in his religion. Rather, he profits by it both in this world and in his religion. When you recognize this with your inner eye—that you are only an enemy to yourself and a friend to your enemy—then you will inevitably part company with envy.

As for its being harmful to you in the religion, this is because by envy, you are angry about the decree of God Most High and you hate His blessing which He has apportioned to His slaves, and His justice which He establishes in His Kingdom and which is hidden in His wisdom. You reject that. This is an offence which strikes at the core of *tawhid* and an obstruction in the path of iman. That in itself is enough of a crime against the religion. You act dishonestly toward one of the believers (*mu‘minun*). You abandon his good counsel and you part company with the *awliya’* of God and the Prophets since they desire good for the slaves of God. You form a partnership with the Devil (Iblis) and all the enemies of faith (*kafirun*) since they desire that the believers experience afflictions and they *desire* that blessings depart. These are malicious things in the heart. They eat up the good actions of the heart like fire consumes firewood, and obliterate them as the night obliterates the day.

As for its being a harm in this world for you, this is because you are pained and punished by your envy. You are always full of grief and sorrow

since God does not cease to pour out blessings on your adversaries. Therefore, you are constantly being punished by every blessing you see, and you are pained by every affliction which is turned away from them. You are constantly full of sorrow. Your breast is constricted in the manner you desire for your enemies and which your enemies desire for you. You wanted severe trial for your enemies, but now you immediately come to severe trial and sorrow yourself. Blessing does not leave the envied person because of your envy. Even if you did not believe in the Rising and the Reckoning, it would still show a lack of astuteness on your part. If you are at all intelligent, you should be on your guard against envy because of the pain and evil it contains and its lack of benefit. How much more should it be when you know that envy is the cause of intense punishment in the next world. How astonishing is a man of intellect who exposes himself to the wrath of God without obtaining any profit at all from it. Indeed, it carries harm and pain which he must endure. His world is destroyed without any gain or benefit.

As for its not having any harm for the envied, one either in his *religion* or this world, it is obvious that blessing will not leave him because of someone else's envy. God decreed it as good fortune and blessing, so it must last until the time which God decreed for it. There is no way to repel it. Everything is decreed with Him and every term has a book.

The one who is envied profits by it both in his religion and in this world. It is clear that his profit in the religion is that he is wronged by you, especially if you publicize your envy by speech and action, by slander and calumny of him, and by destroying his veil and mentioning his bad qualities. It is a gift which you present to him, i.e. by that, you give him your good deeds and so you will meet him bankrupt on the Day of Rising. You will be deprived of blessing then as you were deprived of blessing in this world. It is as if you wished to remove blessing from him while the blessings which God bestows on you continue as He gives you success in good deeds. You give these to him and increase him with blessing upon blessing while you multiply misery for yourself.

As for his profit in this world, the most important of the desires of created beings is grief and sorrow for their enemies. No punishment can be greater than that which you experience from the pain of envy. The goal of your enemies is to have blessing while you are sunk in sorrow and loss. You have done to yourself what they desire to do to you. Because of that, your enemy does not desire your death. He desires to prolong your life in the punishment of envy. This is the knowledge-cure.

As far as the action-cure is concerned, you must make yourself do the opposite of what envy calls you to. If it makes you arrogant, you must humble yourself. If it provokes you to withhold blessing, you must make yourself increase blessing. This is the action-cure.

As for what is necessary in order to prevent envy in the heart when someone irritates you, you should know that if you want blessing to leave him and you direct your tongue against him, then you are an envier. By your envy, you commit an act of rebellion. If you want the blessing to leave him while you restrain yourself outwardly in every way, but you do not dislike your state, then you are also envious and you commit an act of rebellion. This is because envy is an attribute of the heart, not an attribute of action. If you dislike this state by insight, and you restrain your outward actions as well, you have then done what is necessary.

*The purification of the heart from showing-off (riya’)*

Showing-off is one of the blameworthy qualities which it is forbidden to have. God Most High said, “*Woe to those who pray and are heedless of their prayers, to those who show off and withhold*” (Q 107:4–7).

As far as its reality is concerned, you should know that showing-off (*riya’*) is derived from seeing (*ru’ya*). Its root is to seek reputation in people’s hearts. You desire to make them see good qualities in you, and by that, to obtain high rank in their hearts. You can seek high rank by all actions. However, the name “showing-off” specifically refers to seeking high rank in people’s hearts through acts of *ibada*. The definition of showing-off then, is the obtaining of people’s own desires through obedience to God, the Majestic, the Mighty.

Showing-off is of five types: The first is showing-off with the body. That is by outward emaciation so that people will imagine that you are intense in your striving. By emaciation, you also want to indicate scarcity of good. The second is showing-off by dress and appearance. That is by dishevelled hair, tattered garments, bowing the head while walking, leaving the mark of prostration on the face, rolling up your garment, and not cleaning it.

The third is showing-off by words. That is to make remembrance (*dhikr*) apparent in other people’s presence, and to command the good and forbid the objectionable in full view of created beings. It is to manifest anger at objectionable things in the presence of created beings, and to move the lips with *dhikr* in full view of other people. It is also to raise the voice, indicating that it is from sorrow and fear.

The fourth type of showing-off is by action. That is like someone who prays and shows off by standing for a long time, by doing *ruku'* and prostration for a long time, by not turning aside, by keeping still and silent, and by keeping the feet and the palms level. It is the same with fighting in the way of God, the *hajj*, and *sadaqa*.

The fifth is showing-off by associating with people. For instance, a man will mention the Shaykhs often in order to show that he has met many Shaykhs and profited from them. He says, "All the Shaykhs I have met," and "I met so-and-so," and "I went about in the land and served the Shaykhs." He talks about everything that has happened to him.

This, and all that preceded is blameworthy since by it, you seek high rank and reputation in people's hearts.

As for the cure of it, you should know that showing-off is man's nature when he is a child. You can only manage to tame it by intense effort.

There are two stations in its cure: The first is to pluck it out by its roots. These are love of the pleasure of being praised, flight from the pain of criticism, and greed for what other people have. The second is to repel it immediately whenever it comes to mind.

The remedy is to know that showing-off is harmful and corrupts the heart. It prevents success and prevents position with God Most High. It brings punishment and disgrace to the extent that when you are in front of people, there will be shouts of, "You shameless liar! You two-faced deceiver! Why weren't you ashamed when you sold obedience to God Most High for God's hatred out of desire for the world and love of high rank among people? You sought their pleasure in exchange for the wrath of God, and you sought nearness to them in exchange for distance from God."

If you reflect on this shame, you have no alternative but to turn away from showing-off together with turning your attention in this world to dispelling your concern for consideration in the hearts of others. Pleasing people is a goal which you will never attain. If you seek to please them in exchange for the wrath of God, God will be angry with you.

The cure for the greed for what others have is that God Most High is the One who subjects the hearts to withholding or giving. If you bring the bliss of the next world to your heart, you think very little of anything connected to creation. You direct your heart to God. By acts of unveiling, things are opened to you which increase you in intimacy with God—glory be to Him!—and alienate you from creation. This is the knowledge-cure.