European Journal for
Qualitative Research
in Psychotherapy
www.EJQRP.org

European Association
for Integrative Psychotherapy

A Comparison Between the Concepts of Heuristic Enquiry and Tazkiyat-un-nafs

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Abstract: This article offers a comparison between concepts of heuristic enquiry and tazkiyat-un-nafs, the Islamic concept of self/soul purification and/or reformation of the spiritual heart (qalb). The article outlines key concepts of heuristic research methodology as identified by Moustakas (1990) and Sela-Smith (2002) and elaborated by McCann and Tudor (2024). We reflect on the first author's experience while undertaking some original research under the supervision of the second author, both of whom share an interest in cultural and religious identity and how this is or is not considered in psychotherapy (Florence et al., 2019; Tudor, 2019). From that original research, in this article, we discuss the concepts of heuristic research as they exemplify heuristic methodology compared with the Islamic practice of tazkiyat-un-nafs, identifying the noticeable differences between them. The article aims to support researchers who consider integrating Islam into their psychotherapeutic research – and, in parallel, their psychotherapy practice; as such, we view this as a contribution to the Islamic psychology and psychotherapy movement.

Keywords: heuristic enquiry; heuristic self-search inquiry; tazkiyat-un-nafs (purification of the self/soul); Islamic psychology and psychotherapy; qualitative research

Background

We begin by considering the position of the first author in order to give context and rationale for the comparison between heuristic enquiry and tazkiyat-un-nafs. The researcher, a convert to Islam and psychotherapist, found herself stuck somewhere in between her identities as a British white female, a convert Muslim, a transactional analysis psychotherapist, and a trainee Islamic psychotherapist. The latter journey has included, to date, ten years of learning and guidance with a shaykh (spiritual teacher/guide) of tazkiyah.

The challenges of feeling stuck between two cultures, a similar feeling that many converts to Islam have reportedly experienced, led her to research this lived experience to develop suitable psychotherapeutic support for this client group (Sealy, 2021).

Converts to Islam

Converts to Islam in the West experience liminality, which Hermansen defines as "transitional, anxiety-ridden states between detachment from the old and attachment to the new," mainly the case for women (cited in Haddad, 1991, p. 191). Adopting the practices of Islam and making radical lifestyle changes, such as wearing a headscarf (khimar/hijab), can often leave them feeling misunderstood, judged, and rejected by their original/heritage culture and sometimes even their new Muslim community. The liminality of converts often leaves them feeling like a "double stranger" (Sealy, 2021), with reported feelings of shame, fear, anger, low self-esteem, anxiety, stress, and low self-confidence (Ahmed & Amer, 2012; Kose & Loewenthal, 2000; Moosavi, 2015a, 2015b). As a result of the negative experiences of converts to Islam, there are increased calls for convert support (Alyedreessy, 2016; Lahmar, 2018; Muslim Council of Britain [MCB], 2018), as well as for more research considering education support, counselling, and psychological services for converts to Islam (Al-Toma & Hibell, 2011; Suleiman, 2013, 2016).

Discovering Suitable Methodology and Method

The first challenge of the research (initially into the lived experience of liminality amongst converts to Islam) was to find a research methodology that acknowledged the researcher's religious beliefs (or at least did not negate or disregard them) and was open to meaning-making from a dual lens, i.e., an Islamic perspective as well as a (Western) psychological or psychotherapeutic one.

A heuristic enquiry was recognised as one such compatible methodology in its advocacy that, according to Douglass and Moustakas (1985, p. 44), the researcher "follow[s] a direction that will most effectively reveal the descriptive and analogical nature of the theme or problem," and, thereby, connect us with ourselves and our everyday human experiences in a search for meaning. Douglass and Moustakas point out that heuristic research "does not prescribe a methodology" but, instead, promotes "methods that fit the particular investigation" (1985, p. 42). This offers researchers an opportunity to enhance their self-enquiry in a way that is congruent with their self-identity, such as those contributions which integrate indigenous methods to decolonise methodology (Grennell-Hawke, 2018; Hill, 2002), encompass critical race theory (McCann & Tudor, 2022), and compare heuristics with other philosophical perspectives such as Persian illuminationism (Najafi, 2022). In addition, during her

study, the first author discovered some heuristic research that acknowledges the religious beliefs and practices of both researcher and co-researchers in their heuristic enquiry, in this case, to overcome what Michelle (2017) refers to as resistance to spiritual emergence.

Heuristics comes from the Greek word meaning discovery; thus, Moustakas and Douglass' position about methodology, i.e., that the researcher must discover it, is congruent or consistent and challenging (see also Tudor, 2023). Similarly, discussing what is meant by the Islamisation of knowledge Hassan et al. (2016) highlights that this

> is not a process of replacing the existing knowledge with a new knowledge, that has been converted to Islam... [nor is it] a rigid ideology or a religious affiliation, but rather it refers to the process of developing a methodology for dealing with knowledge and its resources. (p. 1359)

This is the approach to research represented in this article.

Tudor (2023) summarises two further strands or positions about this aspect of heuristic research: that some (probably most) researchers and authors identify it primarily as a phenomenological approach to research, with an emphasis on discovery, existentialism, and perceptual psychology (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985); while others view heuristics as both a methodology and a method, rather as Rogers' person-centred approach is both a way of being (Rogers, 1980) and a practice.

Tazkiyat-un-nafs comes from the Islamic concept of self-development - tazkiyah - and is generally translated as purification, originating from the verb "za-kaa," which indicates purification and increase as well as reformation or purification of one's character and spiritual state. Translating terms such as tazkiyah into English and within an English cultural context is challenging, primarily due to what may be lost in translation and what may be added in interpretation because of a great many years since such concepts entered the Muslim lexicon. Many Arabic words are not directly translatable into English, and when attempts are made to do so, the translations often do not do justice to the meanings (Al-Faruqi, 1995). In this sense, as with any translation of one language (in)to another, the process and result are more of an interpretation.

Scholarly reviewers of translated works from tazkiyah scholars suggest that the term tazkiyat-un-nafs are "a modern expression, even if its root origin terms derive from the Qur'an" (Van Ess, 2011, p. 126). Therefore, translating and interpreting tazkiyat-un-nafs requires more attention,

precisely when translating accounts of practice by such scholars, whose advice is that "knowledge is of little use if not joined with the authority derived from practice" (Librande, 1983, p. 125).

In support of understanding and interpreting tazkiyat-un-nafs, the first author considered Islamic sources such as the Qur'an and collections of *Hadith* (Prophetic teachings and narrations) collected by Muhadiths (scholars), namely Al-Tirmidhi, Al-Tabari, Al-Bukhari, and Al-Bayhaqi, using translations of both (dated) or *Hadith* with no recorded date (n/d). Specifically concerning tazkiyat-un-nafs, the original research and this article draw on the translated works of classical Muslim scholars, especially that of Harith Al-Muhasibi (Picken, 2005) and Muhammad Al-Ghazali (2015). In addition, the first author also drew on her lived experience of learning and applying tazkiyat-un-nafs over the last ten years in supervision and guidance with a shaykh of the tazkiyah sciences. Indeed, the preferred way to understand its concepts is through lived experience and application (Al-Ghazali, 2015), another aspect of method and methodology like heuristic enquiry.

Conventions

In articles written in the English language, it is commonplace to italicise "foreign" words. However, this convention not only privileges English but also exoticises and diminishes the other/Other, in this case, the other language and its concepts. In line with the increasing resistance to this (e.g., Daly, 2016), in this article, we include Arabic words in plain type (except where citing the titles of works such as the *Qur'an* and *Hadith*.

References to Islamic sources such as the *Qur'an* are presented with the entire chapter title in Arabic as well as the number of the chapter in the *Qur'an* (not the chronological order of revelation) and the verse number, for example, *Qur'an,* Surah l-Maidah, 5:48. About the citation of *Hadith*, Melchert (n.d.) identifies some existing conventions where "it is convenient to cite individual hadith reports by number" (p. 4), e.g., no. 55. However, as it is common to find marginal cross-references to date of publication and edition and translations, we limit the citations to *Hadith* to those found on a modern-day resource, i.e., Sunnah.com (2023) with citations to the author of a collection of *Hadith*, with no specific publication date (At-Tirmidhi, n.d.) or where available a translated publication date (Al-Bayhaqi, 2013) with the volume number and/or *Hadith* number (sometimes seen with a number relating to the Arabic version and a number in a English translated copy (e.g., 611/1413).

In the heuristic literature, following Moustakas (1990), writers use the words "inquiry" and "inquire" (United States and English spelling). Discussing this, Tudor (2022) argues for the use of "enquire" and "enquiry" (United Kingdom and New Zealand English spelling) as it is more reflective of the pursuit of discovery and meaning-making than "inquiry", which, at least in U.K. English, is more associated with investigation. This is particularly important regarding this current research into the lived experiences of converts to Islam, who are often placed "under investigation" in a "judiciary sense of testimony" in research (Sremac, 2016, p. 68).

Notwithstanding our adoption of these conventions, when citing or referring to literature, we use the fonts and terms as they are used in the original.

Considering the interface between Heuristic Enquiry and Tazkiyat-un-Nafs

Heuristic enquiry grew from the same philosophical roots as humanistic psychology (Tudor, 2022). Like humanistic psychology, heuristic enquiry aims to acknowledge and understand the value of experience and the subject's life experience, motivation, desires, intentions, goals, and the connection between the subject (individual, couple, family, group) and the social world. While some within humanistic psychology are atheist and even anti-religious, others acknowledge that spiritual aspiration is an expression of human actualisation and aspiration; and, thus, spirituality, faith, and religion are appropriate subjects of heuristic enquiry. However, both the Western traditions differ somewhat from a tazkiyah philosophy in that personal and collective social aspiration, change, and growth are grounded by the intention of a Divine purpose and aim, i.e., unity with Allah (tawhid). Transformation with God in mind is behind a growing movement in Islamic psychology in the West, where faith-adapted or inspired psychotherapeutic theory and practice is taking shape as more Muslims migrate to or are born in non-Muslim countries or where non-Muslims have converted to Islam. Islamic psychology is just one of many responses to religious communities' call for faith-aligned psychotherapies that recognise the relationship between God, the soul, and their psychological health.

The extraction of the soul (psyche) from psychology has meant that, with some exceptions, Western psychology – and psychotherapy – is more associated with addressing the mind and body than the soul, and with treating conditions and personality, based on a medical model of health, rather than helping with concerns about faith (Rassool, 2021). Despite the scientific and secular focus of Western psychology in the last century, and especially Freud's (1927/1961) strategy of distancing psychoanalysis from religion, attempts to reclaim its spiritual dimension can be found in psychosynthesis and transpersonal psychology in the work of various authors who have considered the interface between Christianity and psychology and therapy (e.g., Thorne, 1998, 2000), and in movements such as Islamic psychology and integrative Islamic psychotherapy. Both these disciplines have been exploring integrative and stand-alone approaches to psychotherapy, and Al-Karam (2018) considers tazkiyat-un-nafs as Islam's version of psychotherapy. However, Rassool (2021) considers that not all Western psychology needs to be "Islamised" and produce separate, stand-alone faith-based practices. He reiterates the advice of the late Professor Badri, the founding father of Islamic psychology, who wrote that "we do not need to develop our own Islamic statistical psychology or to raise an ethical battle against neutral theories of learning. Such areas, as I [Badri] said, are "no man's land" between psychology and other exact sciences" (Badri, 1979, p. 9).

Heuristic Enquiry

Heuristic inquiry was originally developed by Clark Moustakas, an educational psychologist who helped forge the humanistic psychology movement and in 1961, founded the American Association for Humanistic Psychology. Heuristic enquiry is strikingly like psychotherapy in its process and potential for transformation (Hiles, 2001; Sela-Smith, 2002) and has been discussed as a way of conceptualising psychotherapy (Beck, 1979; Moustakas, 1990; O'Hara, 1986; Stevens, 2006) and supervision (Merry, 2004). This form of enquiry considers the thoughts and feelings of the self in an active, self-directed pursuit, delving deeper through the conscious layers of the mind, meeting with intuition and feelings in order that the tacit dimension of experience becomes known (Moustakas, 1990; Sela-Smith, 2002).

This discovery of tacit experience occurs through "acts of comprehension, a sense of unity" and "an understanding of the individual qualities or parts of a certain vision of truth" (Moustakas, 1990, pp. 20–21). Moustakas (1990) suggests that, in every learner, in every person, there are creative sources of energy and meaning that are often hidden or denied. The heuristic researcher seeks knowledge of these meanings through a question, "one that has been a personal challenge and puzzlement in the search to understand oneself and the world in which one lives" (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 15).

Based on his self-enquiry into his own experience of loneliness (Moustakas, 1961), Moustakas (1990) identifies six phases of heuristic research: initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis. He and his colleagues also identified seven concepts that underpin heuristic enquiry: identification with the focus of enquiry, self-dialogue, tacit knowledge, intuition, indwelling, focusing, and the internal frame of reference (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Moustakas, 1990). Based on her study of Moustakas' (1990) work, Sela-Smith (2002) reframed these concepts to emphasise the interiority of the self-experience in heuristic enquiry: self-experience, inward reach, surrender, self-dialogue, self-search, and transformation, including consideration of resistance (Sela-Smith, 2001). Drawing on both Moustakas (1990) and Sela-Smith (2002), McCann and Tudor (2024) combine these two sets of concepts in an overall framework, which we also use to frame our present discussion of heuristic concepts. Finally, we also draw on other researchers who have contributed to the understanding and development of heuristic enquiry, i.e., Hiles (2001), Sultan (2019), and Tudor (2017, 2022, 2023).

Tazkiyat-un-Nafs

Tazkiyat-un-nafs involves the purification or reformation of the self (nafs) concerning the dis-ease or ease and functioning of the spiritual heart (qalb), for example: "Verily in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest!" (*Qur'an,* Ar-Ra'd, 13:28). Purification and transformation are through the acquisition of knowledge (ilm), its application ('aml), and worship of Allah (ibadah). This is based on an Hadith relating to knowledge and worship as the foundation of tazkiyat-un-nafs: "A man came to the Prophet and asked, 'What is tazkiyat-un-nafs?' The Prophet replied, 'that a person knows [emphasis added] that Allah is with him wherever he is'." (Al-Bayhaqi, 2013).

The *Qur'an* suggests that, ultimately, tazkiyat-un-nafs comes from Allah, in the blessing of knowledge (ilm) and spiritual illumination, and is the reason for the adoption of its laws (shir'atan) and methods (manhage): "to each of you We prescribed a law (shir'atan) and a method (manhage)." (*Qur'an,* Surah l-Maidah, 5:48). The shir'atan refers to the ordained way to Allah (*Qur'an,* Surah l-Jathiyah, 45:18), the

methodology of Islam, based on the Qur'anic value system and the epistemology of Tawhid (asserting one God), which emphasises Divine law as its main component. The manhage refers to the tazkiyah practices (i.e. its methods) based on the applications of the *Qur'an* and sunnah (example) of the Prophet. Thus, to practice tazkiyat-un-nafs methods in

academic research would mean that the researcher is adhering to Islamic law with the specific intention of purification of the heart.

The *Qur'an* also mentions the need for self-motivation and striving in the tazkiyah (purification) path: for "he who purifies it [self] has succeeded" (*Qur'an*, Surah Alaq, 91:9). The concepts of tazkiyat-un-nafs according to Al-Muhasabi and Al-Ghazali are Ilm (the seeking of knowledge), marifat-un-nafs (deeper self-knowledge), al-muhasabah (self-examination), al-muraqabah (self-watching with God consciousness), and al-mujahadah (self-striving and surrender on the path of Islam).

Over the past few decades, Islamic psychology has delved into the application of tazkiyat-un-nafs through the lens of Sufism, tasawwuf or by considering the works of medieval Islamic scholars such as Al-Ghazali (Awang & Jais, 2020; Rothman & Coyle, 2020; Sharom, 2001; Uthman Nujati, 2001). However, recent research, exemplified by Kaplick and Skinner has critiqued the focus on medieval scholars and stipulated that the development of an Islamic psychology approach is based on the *Qur'an* and the *Hadith* (Prophetic narrations)— "to truly establish Islamic psychology as an alternative paradigm to Western psychology" (2017, p. 70). They also highlight challenges for researchers in this field include distinguishing between an "Islamic psychology approach" from the "psychology of Islam", which tends to employ a "filter" or "compassion" approach in its research (Iqbal & Skinner, 2019, p. 66).

In response to such points, the first author addressed both concerns in her research by implementing the Prophet's manhage (method) by utilising the *Qur'an* in its revealed order as the prophetic approach to tazkiyat-un-nafs towards the development of an "Islamic psychology approach". Secondly, in embracing the manhage, she recognised the importance of a comparative approach with another methodology (in this case, heuristic enquiry) to distinguish concepts relating to the "psychology of Islam" that align with her practice of a "pluralistic" approach to psychotherapy research (Smith et al., 2021). The comparative approach was also deemed suitable and congruent with the researcher's identity, allowing for a nuanced investigation into converts to Islam and the

application of tazkiyat-un-nafs methods to overcome her sense of feeling stuck in her research in experiencing what Badri (1979, p. 9) described as the "no man's land between psychology and other exact sciences."

Comparisons Between Concepts of Heuristic Enquiry and Concepts of Tazkiyat-un-nafs

This part of the article compares heuristic enquiry with the concepts of tazkiyat-un-nafs (see also Table 1).

Comparing tazkiyah practices with heuristic enquiry reveals certain complexities. Two specific issues are: (i) the effects of translation and interpretation across cultures and time, which has resulted in a lack of uniformity, agreement, and consolidation concerning its translated terms; and (ii) the lack of clarity regarding the differences and similarities in schools of thought, theory, and practice between tazkiyat-un-nafs, tasawuuf, and Sufism (Islamic mysticism), including aspects of its educational (fiqh) practice of self-analysis, and techniques of heart purification as a means to spiritual elevation.

As a result, the tazkiyah concepts presented and discussed in this article are primarily an offering of experiential knowledge supported by scholarship that adheres to the shar'at (law). The first author's experiential knowledge is through a gradual application over the last 18 years since her conversion to Islam, and more recently, the comparisons between tazkiyat-un-nafs and heuristic enquiry in her research. This follows the Prophet's example of gradual learning and application: "Abdullah ibn Masud said, 'when a man amongst us learned ten verses of the *Qur'an*, he would not move until he had understood their meanings and how to act by them'" (Al-Tabari, 1997, 1:80).

Identification with the Focus of Enquiry

In heuristic enquiry, the concept of identification with a focus of enquiry acknowledges that the area of research is of passionate interest to the researcher, engages all aspects of their being, and has the potential to hold compelling implications that may have important social meanings. The researcher uses the self to "get inside the question, become one with it, and thus achieve and understanding of it" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 15). The researcher employs self-

dialogue to encounter "one's autobiography and significant relationships within a social context" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 27). This can include employing reflective self-enquiry methods, such as journaling, and a "view" or review of literature relating to the experience being researched to gain a broader social context of the experience (Tudor, 2023).

The equivalent concept in tazkiyah is "Iqra", the first revealed command in the *Qur'an*, which calls the enquirer to seek knowledge (*Qur'an*, Surah Alaq, 96:1). This focuses one's self-search with God consciousness, in adherence to the second revealed verse in the Qur'an which commands that "Iqra" is sought "In the name of your Lord" (*Qur'an*, Surah Alaq, 96:1). These first revealed verses begin tazkiyat-un-nafs by encouraging the "reader" to reflect deeply on the connections between self-enquiry and the Creator, in a similar way that heuristic enquiry aims to "get inside the question [and] become one with it" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 15).

Self-Dialogue

In heuristic enquiry, the process of self-dialogue is dialogical, reflective, open, receptive, and attuned. It engages the intellect, emotion, and spirit to find, as Moustakas (1999, p. 16) puts it: "unity in hidden likenesses". Methods of self-dialogue can include songwriting and artistic expression (Beech, 2014; Fox, 2018), poetry and journaling (Haertl, 2014) and dialogic-dialectic self-interview (as developed by Ozertugrul, 2017).

As a tazkiyah practice, self-dialogue is the pursuit of deriving intimate knowledge of the self (ma'rifat-un-nafs), which Al-Muhasabi says is "difficult to identify as it dwells in the hidden depths" (reported in Picken, 2005, p. 252). Concepts of tazkiyat-un-nafs assist with obtaining this deeper self-knowledge (marifat-un-nafs), such as al-muraqabah (self-watching with God consciousness), al-mujahadah (surrender and striving against the corruptions in the self), and al-muhasabah (introspective self-examination). The practice or method of self-dialogue includes tafakur (deep reflection), tadabbur (reflection with the *Qur'an*), salah (prayer), dua and dhikr (supplication/meditation).

Tacit Knowledge or Knowing

Moustakas (1990) asserts that, in every learner, in every person, there are creative sources of energy and meaning that are often tacit, hidden, or denied. Reaching the tacit dimension of the self is a powerful revelation that results from "acts of comprehension" gaining a "sense of unity" and "an understanding of the individual qualities or parts" and "certain vision of truth" (Moustakas, 1990, pp. 20–21).

In Islam, the tacit dimension refers to knowledge determined through yaqeen (certain knowledge), which resides in the heart (qalb). This requires one to assess the level of knowing, which has certain levels which are, Ilm-ul-yaqeen; certainty as a result of knowledge, ayn-ul-yaqeen; certainty as a consequence of contemplation and vision, and haqq-ul-yaqeen; the final level of certainty gained through experience, the ideal of the spiritual and intellectual pursuit of tacit knowledge (Laliwala, 2005).

Intuition

Heuristic enquiry relies heavily on consideration of intuition and "trust of oneself" as a guide to what is tacit in the self (Moustakas, 1990, p. 17). It is described and emphasised as "the bridge between the explicit and the tacit" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 23). In heuristic enquiry, intuition is considered at all stages of establishing new knowledge, acknowledging Polanyi's (1969, pp. 118-119) view that intuition is valuable "to the subject of scientific enquiry and of the holding of scientific knowledge." In tazkiyat-un-nafs, some Muslim psychologists and researchers regard that intuition alludes one to the more profound knowledge of the heart (qalb) and connection with Allah:

> The Qalb aspect is the access point in which we can connect directly with the Divine ... It is the intuition or a sense of knowing what is right … The Qalb is the centre of the self and is where we are able to connect to our fitrah, our true, pure self that came from God and will ultimately return to God. (Rothman, 2019, p. 35)

However, social conditioning also affects intuition; therefore, it cannot offer certainty of the revelation of Ultimate Reality, truth, or knowledge (Al-Ghazali, 1962). Examination of one's intuition is required through the practice of al-muhasabah and al-muraqabah, which includes the study of the *Qur'an* and the traditions of the Prophet. If intuition conflicts with the furqan (Qur'anic criterion), one assumes one's intuition is unclear and requires further enquiry. However, if sound, it can inform us of the highest certitude and dissolve doubts and hesitations (Al-Ghazali, 1962). Therefore, intuition plays a foundational role in the process of acquirement of knowledge.

Indwelling

Indwelling refers to the heuristic process of turning inwards to seek more profound, more extensive knowledge of the nature, qualities, or themes of the experience being considered (Moustakas, 1990). This requires self-engagement and self-enquiry until the researcher can fully depict the experience in any way they can (Moustakas, 1990). Thus, indwelling moves between the self as experienced internally and externally: the subjective and objective, as it were, as the researcher turns inward to connect with their experience and outward as they explicate it externally through different forms of expression and description (Sultan, 2019).

Similarly, tazkiyat-un-nafs asserts that one intimately examines and determines the state of their self (nafs) and the self's influence on the spiritual heart (qalb). This requires Muslims to "gather their attention" to each dimension of themselves, thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations and consider, reflect, and observe themselves with God-consciousness (al-muraqabah) (Helminski, 1992, p. 89). Salah- prayer is one such al-muraqabah practice used to gather our attention and indwell (Helminski, 1992). This action requires one to move one's focus from the external to the internal connection with presence and peace (Islam), for "in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction" (*Qur'an*, Ar-Rad, 13:28).

Focusing

Focusing directs the heuristic enquiry towards a "significant idea relevant to personal growth, insight, and change" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 25). Douglass and Moustakas (1985, p. 51) describe it as "a process to identify and assess connecting feelings and thoughts and achieve cognitive knowledge," which includes "refinement of meaning and perception that register as internal shifts and alterations of behaviour."

Focusing on what is revealed through the practices of tazkiyat-un-nafs is termed al-muhasabah (self-examination). According to Al-Ghazali (2015, pp. 33–38), al-muhasabah is the examination of past acts, which, if necessary, "involves a certain level of reproach of one's actions". Thus, it relates to tawbah (repentance), and "restraining the soul from non-commendable acts". As well as self-examination (al-muhasabah), and reproach (tawbah), the Muslim researcher can assess their perceptions, i.e., "internal shifts and alterations of behaviour" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 51), through "al-mu'min miratul mu'min a believer is the mirror of his brother" (Al-Adab al-Mufrad, n.d., 12:238). According to Al-Ghazali (1995), this can be derived in the following way:

Firstly, sit before a Shaykh who has insight into these faults and hidden weaknesses … hardly such a man is found in this age ...[or] seek out a true, perceptive and religious friend… this too, however, is rarely to be found... [and] if no one can be found... learn of the faults of one's soul by listening to the statements of one's enemies… [or] mingle with the people, and… attribute to oneself every blameworthy thing which one sees in them. (1995, pp. 51–54)

Internal Frame of Reference

In heuristic enquiry, what emerges from the self-experience will relate back to the researcher's internal frame of reference; whether that is knowledge derived through intuition, or observed phenomena, its "medium or base is the internal frame of reference" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 26). The internal frame of reference "serves as a catalyst" for the various processes of the heuristic enquiry whereby the researcher "returns again and again to seek within themselves a deeper understanding of their perceptions, feelings, thoughts, decisions, and actions" (Sultan, 2019, p. 92). Moustakas (1990, p. 26) comments that this "will sometimes appear to be irrational when viewed from the outside."

This can pose as a challenge for Muslim researchers, as sharing one's inner self-striving (jihad-un-nafs) is to reveal one's faults, which is not advisable, according to the following *Hadith*: "On the authority of Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him), 'Every one of my Ummah, every person, every Muslim will be safe on the day of Judgement except one category, those who publicly proclaim their sins'."(Al-Bukhari, n.d., 6069). On the other hand, sharing how one overcomes a difficulty, connecting with others and sharing wisdom (hikmah) for healing purposes is deemed acceptable (Al-Ghazali, 2015).

Self-Experience

Sela-Smith (2002, p. 63) emphasises that self-experience considers the "I-who-feels" aspect of the researcher self in a heuristic enquiry, i.e., what "I know in my heart" (2002, p. 57). According to Sela-Smith, the validity of this self-experience is a subjective discovery and is "not possible by comparing with others' experiences", as this could cause a "distraction from the researchers' self-enquiry" (2002, p. 69). However, other heuristic researchers (including Moustakas) consider that validation in a heuristic enquiry also involves establishing the meaning-making of the experience by considering the similar experiences of others. This can cause conflict for the heuristic researcher, who, on the one hand, is invested in self-search, but on the other, may feel they need to adhere to certain

convention and/or academic standards of research practice which require validity, applicability, and transferability despite the fact that they represent a different paradigm of research. Tudor (2022) suggests that self-experience can be extended from Sela-Smith's (2002, p. 57) focus on an "I-who-feels" position to a "we-who-care" position (Tudor, 2023, p. 123), which reflects a more outward-looking interest and focus.

Similarly, tazkiyat-un-nafs may be considered an individual pursuit. However, its methods encourage support towards individual and collective growth, as in the concept and purpose of the jammah (congregation) and ummah (community). Thus, in tazkiyat-un-nafs, while self-experience considers the "I-who-feels", it examines it (al-muhasabah) in the context of "I-who-believes" which orients experience towards others (congregation and community). This represents a constant striving for self-knowledge (jihad-un-nafs), which comes through action, including acts of piety such as charity, in community, and passing on what has been discovered (dawah). This is, based on the Qur'anic verse: "Be you Rabbaniyun [learned men of religion who practise what they know and teach/be an example to others], because you are teaching the book, and you are studying it" (*Qur'an*, Surah Al-Imran, 3:79).

Inward Reach

Inward reach refers to the researchers' "intense and passionate concern", where one "reaches inward for tacit awareness and knowledge" (Sela-Smith, 2002, p. 69). Sela-Smith highlighted that Moustakas attention to focus the heuristic enquiry "inward on feeling responses of the researcher to the outward situation rather than exclusively to relations between the pieces of that outside situation" (2002, p. 59). The inward reach is a commitment to self-awareness that can lead to "self-transformation, and reconstruction of a hindering worldview" (2002, p. 81). This will inevitably have social implications. She also recognised that "we have jointly created a mirror of our collective internal tacit knowledge" (2002, p. 86). As we reach inwardly, we reflect what we find and change as we polish our mirrors to see what is meaningful and authentic.

Again, we offer the example of jihad-un-nafs, a Muslim's self-striving actions in attaining deeper self-knowledge (al-ma'rifah). The Prophet of Islam said, "part of the perfection of one's Islam is his leaving that which does not concern him." (an-Nawawi, n.d. 12). The inward reach (jihad-un-nafs) is superior to the outer war, and one must strive to reform inwardly than fight against others to change. The Prophet,

peace be upon him: "The fighter in Allah's path is the one who strives against his lower self in obedience to Allah." (At-Tirmidhi, n.d. 1621).

Surrender

Surrender is not noted by Moustakas (1990) as a heuristic concept, though he does refer to the researcher's actions requiring "passionate, disciplined commitment" (1990, p. 15); it was Sela-Smith (2002) who later emphasises the importance of the researcher's "surrender to the question" (p. 69) and that without surrender to one's "nonprojected feelings, the tacit level will not be reached and brought into consciousness" (p. 81). However, while advocating the concept of surrender, Tudor (2023, p. 123) critiques Sela-Smith's focus on "I" and feeling as a "surrender to individualism", in response to which he advances, if anything, a surrender also to the social. The first author considers that surrender requires bravery in "experiencing an unknown" (Sela-Smith, 2002, p. 81), which can create ambivalence in the researcher. For instance, this researcher (the first author) experienced some resistance to surrender in enquiring of her hidden "non-projected" feelings for fear of rejection from others. Following Tudor's (2023) idea about surrendering to the social, she considered that, as she surrendered to her fear of the social, she was able to be more seen and heard as a Muslim in her research (see pp. 13-14 below).

The Islamic concept of surrender concerning tazkiyat-un-nafs requires al-mujahadah (surrender and striving), which begins by declaring: "la illha illallah", i.e., that there is no other deity worthy of worship than the One Creator, Allah. This means surrendering one's ego and/or self to a higher purpose and aim derived through knowledge, self-development/purification, and transformation through peaceful (asalaamu) submission (Islam). Surrendering to Allah is not a mere physical resignation or acceptance of defeat. Instead, it is genuinely to surrender the self (nafs) and heart (qalb) to receive and follow the guidance from Allah in trust, longing, and love for union with Allah (Tawhid).

During her doctoral research, a challenge arose for the researcher that necessitated surrender, described by Carson (2022) as "crossing the threshold into the strange"—a passage "few dare to traverse" (2022, p. 4). Crossing this unfamiliar terrain demanded courage to confront the societal judgment prevalent within her religious and heritage cultural community. She ventured into a liminal space, characterised by Turner (1969) as "a period and space detached from conventional social norms, wherein critical examination of the

core values and beliefs of the surrounding culture takes place" (1969, p. 156). Within this liminality, she employed rituals proposed by Douglas (1966) to "navigate the risk" of rejection in this "physical and symbolic detachment" (1966, p. 95). The ritual adopted was wearing the khimar/hijab, the Islamic head covering, and modest attire adhered to by Muslims of both genders (albeit more prominently observed in this form among women in the West).

Wearing the khimar in a non-Muslim-dominated environment epitomised an act of bravery required for "surrender", in this instance to the Sacred, while not succumbing to societal pressures and expectations. This transitional object symbolised what often remains "unseen", hidden beneath the metaphorical veil of societal assumptions, judgments, and misconceptions.

Transformation

Transformation is ultimately at the core of heuristic enquiry, whether that is transforming understanding or intended as an act of self-enquiry and transformation. The researcher's enquiry is "embedded in the story", where, according to Sela-Smith, "self-transformation is an expected outcome of the heuristic method" (2002, p. 70).

In Islam, there is no knowledge as crucial as self-knowledge if this is intended for Tawhid (Unity with Allah) in the spiritual pursuit. Transformation by spiritual purification means that the body, heart, and mind are working towards harmony with the Islamic criterion (furqan) and are transcending the levels of faith from Islam (submission to Allah) to emaan (faith, belief, trust) and ihsan, excellence in character and worship of Allah.

Transcending the levels of faith through the application of tazkiyat-un-nafs practices demonstrates the researcher's unwavering commitment to her faith throughout the research process. This dedication cultivated an experience where emaan (faith) flourished in alignment with her being and her relationship with Allah. This deep introspection opened her heart to self-love, self-acceptance, and forgiveness, consequently enhancing and elevating the qualities of her character. This profound connection enabled personal and profound growth, allowing her to embrace virtues that enriched her character. Through this journey, she found a harmonious synchrony between her inner self and her spiritual beliefs, resulting in a deeper understanding and alignment with her faith, thereby fostering a sense of peace and contentment within.

Resistance

Sela-Smith's contribution to heuristic enquiry includes considering any resistance encountered during the researcher's self-enquiry. If resistance to the self-search is encountered, then enquiry of and "reformation of any personal myths" is advised in order to overcome resistance and complete the heuristic enquiry, not just with curiosity as to its nature, but with a transformational aim (2002, p. 78).
Overcoming resistance in the self (nafs) is a key objective of tazkiyat-un-nafs. It requires al-mujahadah (surrender and striving against the corruptions in the self), al-muhasabah (self-examination), and constant watching of the self-reactions with al-muraqabah (a consciousness of Allah). Resistance in the self is a call to tazkiyat-un-nafs and is reformable by application of the way of Allah, as the *Qur'an* asserts: "There is not to be upon the Prophet any resistance concerning that which Allah has imposed upon him. [This is] the established way of Allah with those [prophets] who have passed on before, ever is the command of Allah a destiny decreed" (*Qur'an*, Surah l-Ahzab, 33:38).

A deeper connection and understanding of the researcher's inner resistance, an impasse rooted in childhood memories and contradictions, surfaced when reflecting (tafakur) on the patterns and ripples in the sand and water at a beach, which were reminiscent of her parents' conflict during her childhood. This experience led her to ponder a verse in the Qur'an (Surah Adh-Dhariyat, 51:7) while contemplating the meaning of the ripples and waves in the sand. The following is an excerpt from this tadabbur practice:

> When I returned home, I looked at these images which reminded of a verse in the *Qur'an*, Al-Hubuk—that describes the patterns of creation in Allah's "marvellous design" (*Qur'an*, Surah Adh-Dhariyat, 51:7). Further interpretation of Al-Hubuk by tafsir (exegesis) and tadabbur (deeper contemplation) revealed a connection to the images I captured of the sand; al-Hubuk is translated to refer to "the track of stars, rows of rings" (like a coat of armour), and "ripples in the sand and water" (Lane, 1863, Book 1, p. 504). Also, to my surprise, the verse that follows reads: "Surely you are [lost] in conflicting views" (*Qur'an*, Surah Adh-Dhariyat, 51:7), which uncannily reflected my troubled memories in the ripples left by conflicting tides. The patterns of Al-Hubuk also reflect a glimmer of hope in the pools of seawater left by the tide—glimmering pebbles and shells washed and purified by the salty sea. With each memory that I notice, process, and purify with Allah in mind, I surrendered to His destiny, acknowledging the free will He created within me—a sign that He sees, hears, and is with

me, connecting and unifying my fragmentation, dissonance, and divide. (Cardo, 2024, pp. 107-108)

Reflection on the Comparative Methodology and Method

From this comparative analysis, it can be seen that there is considerable synergy between the concepts of heuristic enquiry and those in tazkiyah-un-nafs, which is summarised in Table 1. The noticeable difference is that, while heuristic enquiry, especially in the form that Sela-Smith (2001) developed it, relies on the researcher's self-search, tazkiyat-un-nafs prioritises self-examination with a consciousness of Allah to attain certain knowledge (yaqeen) and transformation (Islam, emaan and ihsaan). In this context, Tudor's (2023) contribution to a critical heuristics that offers an outward reach and focus helps open up (Western) heuristic enquiry to cross-cultural engagement and research.

Heuristic Concepts	Tazkiyah Concepts
Identification with a focus of enquiry	Iqra (seek knowledge) Al-Marifat-un-nafs (intimate knowledge of the self)
Self-dialogue	Al-muhasabah (self-examination)
Tacit knowledge/knowing	Yaqeen (certainty)
Intuition	Al-muraqabah (self-watching with God consciousness) Al-muhasabah (self-examination)
Indwelling	Al-muraqabah (self-watching with God consciousness)
Focusing	Al-muhasabah (self-examination)
Internal frame of reference	Jihad-un-nafs (self-striving)
Self-experience	Al-muhasabah (self-examination), Ummah (community), Dawah (teach)
Inward reach	Jihad-un-nafs (self-striving), Al-Marifat-un-nafs (Intimate knowledge of the self)
Surrender	Islam (surrender to 'la illha illallah' One God)
	Al- mujahadah (surrender and striving against the corruption in the self)
Transformation	Islam (surrender), Emaan (belief) and Ihsaan (excellence)
Resistance	al-mujahadah (surrender and striving against the corruptions in the self) al-muhasabah (self-examination) al-muraqabah (self-watching God consciousness)

Table 1: A Comparison of Concepts from Heuristic Enquiry and Tazkiyah-un-nafs

The *Qur'an* implies that the purification of the soul, known as tazkiyat-un-nafs, stems from Allah's blessing of knowledge (Ilm) and spiritual enlightenment. This purification is the underlying reason for embracing its laws (shariah/shariat/shir'atan) and methods (manhage): "To each of you, We prescribed a law (shir'atan) and a method (manhage)." (*Qur'an*, Surah Al-Maidah, 5:48). The researcher applied the concepts of tazkiyat-un-nafs in the self-enquiry research aspect of her overall research on the liminality of converts to Islam and as such overcame her resistance and experiences of stuckness in the research, informing her personal development and impacting her practice of psychotherapy with other converts to Islam by considering the use of the *Qur'an* in its revealed order as a "manhage" for tazkiyat-un-nafs.

Finally, we include an example of this methodology and method in practice.

An Example of Heuristic, Tazkiyah Practice in Research

In her research, based on this comparative methodology comprising concepts from both heuristic research and tazkiyah-un-nafs, the first author applied both heuristic and tazkiyah practices to derive experiential knowledge of their meaning and to overcome feeling stuck in between her various identities as a British white female, a convert Muslim, a psychotherapist, and researcher. Her initial focus of enquiry was one that she later realised was more about conforming to certain Western scientific ideas of what constitutes academic research, for example, interviewing participants, which resulted in her initially hiding her own faith in her heuristic enquiry of others. Her self-dialogue had quickly diverted focus from an initial self-enquiry of her stuck-ness to a dialogue with others on the liminality of converts to Islam. She ignored her

intuition to explore her feelings of stuck-ness and instead began to indwell and focus on the experiences of six recruited co-researchers (participants), all converts to Islam, also psychotherapists.

Her resistance persisted until she began to indwell and focus on her self-experience, uncovering that her earlier deflection from the self-enquiry was not only because of her fear of academia as a student, but also, and more profoundly, of being misunderstood and judged as a Muslim convert, a common fear noted in the literature on converts to Islam (Sremac, 2016) and expressed by her female co-researchers in their interviews:

> I will push on, despite my resistance, and move towards considering how other converts experience liminality. The literature on converts to Islam says they often feel anxious in their liminal state (Haddad, 1991), a state often reported by my convert clients and an experience which led me to psychotherapy. Should I then consider employing case study research with convert clients in psychotherapy? This feels more personally meaningful. Or how about I interview other converts, converts to Islam who are also psychotherapists? (Research Journal, May 2019, in Cardo, 2024, p. 54)

Douglass and Moustakas (1985) encourage heuristic researchers "to be who they are" and employ methods which "follow a direction that will most effectively reveal the descriptive and analogical nature of the theme or problem" (1985, pp. 41, 44). This required the employment of multiple self-dialogue methods related to each of her identities as a convert to Islam, and a psychotherapist from a Western British upbringing, methods which included: keeping a research journal; writing reflective poetry; doing a gestalt two-chair exercise; the use of embodied relational transcribing of her co-researchers' interviews (to capture her own reactions and responses), as well the use of transactional analysis theory and even song lyrics from seventies folk/rock band Fleetwood Mac to enquire deeper towards discovery of the tacit dimensions of her experience. The researcher also sought external support during her research, reflective of the "we-who-care" position advocated by Tudor (2023, p. 123), for example, by considering the co-researcher interviews as valuable reflector of her own enquiry and frame of reference. A noticeable example of this is reflected in the encounter between the researcher and co-researcher Sophie, which expanding the researcher's awareness of her need to trust the process and others:

> Sofie picked up the blue dust that had fallen from her chalk and, with her finger, and began to dab it around the black

ego spots on the page: "That feels reassuring somehow, I really like that, that's making me feel better somehow." I reach out to the blue chalk dust, put my fingers to it, and add dabs to her picture: "Yeah... I quite want to join in", I say. Noticing my intrusion and sensing her alarm, I pull myself back. She says, "but that's interesting and that's lovely that… there was a bit of me that said, oh she's touching my picture." I laughed nervously; she continued, "I just thought actually that's lovely so carry on because it's about finding those of us that we can share this with." Relieved, I replied softly, "look who's around and who will support you", to which she added, "and that feels like something about letting other people in, yeah or maybe

> not, but I think the struggle has been finding those people and the fact that I can talk to you about this feels lovely." (Cardo, 2024, pp. 121-122)

Surrendering to the inward reach required facing and overcoming her resistance which deeper enquiry of illuminated trust issues arising from previous traumatic experiences and a fear of rejection fuelled by self-doubt in her academic ability. The following "reforming personal myths" (Sela-Smith, 2002, p. 78) in overcoming her resistance, occurred in this order:

1. Spiritual and psychological self-care, including personal therapy, attention to her physical health and some time out during Ramadan.
2. Further research on heuristic enquiry methodology and tazkiyah methods (from which this article evolved) specifically in order to clarify methods and support academic understanding.
3. Engagement with a research supervisor who supported the self-enquiry focus and who had in-depth knowledge of the research methodology of heuristic enquiry. It was not necessary that he had knowledge of the subject as the focus of heuristic research supervision is on facilitating the researcher's self-experience and process.
4. Employment of methods in the research which aligned with the researcher's spiritual tazkiyah aims, which included employing all the tazkiyah concepts mentioned in the article (and listed in Table 1).

A final phase of incubation occurred, this time during Ramadan when the researcher retreated from the intense gaze of the research. Increased acts of worship, such as salah (prayer), dua (supplication) and dhikr (meditative contemplation, praise and thanks to Allah), and movement out of resistance occurred in the researcher surrendering to reach inwardly and focus to achieve al-marifat-un-nafs (intimate knowledge of the self) in a heuristic phase of explication, which included sharing with

her spiritual supervisor, a shaykh of tazkiyah, to gain deeper understanding through "mirrors" as recommended by Al-Ghazali to aid al-muhasabah. The researcher "reached out" to her shaykh in the form of a poem, expressing her "conflict in the hope that he would understand my struggle and respond with some remedy and ease" (Cardo, 2024, p. 105).

The Tides of Conversion

I find myself in a very familiar place, an ambiguous zone.
I am scared to voice it because maybe I am alone?
Maybe it is my reality and no one else's?
This ever-present voice of the ego always chases.
The familiar dark swell of thoughts fills my mind.
Do all tides talk in conflict, or is this just mine?
I end up most days wondering if my convictions are authentic,
or are they just a product of sin, something unrepented?
This dependency of some kind, on wanting recognition,
the swell pulls me down, drowning in my own omission.
Is my conversion a way of pleasing another,
begging for rescue because of an absent other?
I use someone else's rope and cling to hope.
Motionless and heavy, I'm tired of this struggle,
I let the swell take me, and to my surprise those waves begin to cuddle.
Glimmering islands of gifts soon appear,
love and hope begin to come near,
and when these shores of new hope refresh me,
the tide comes back but this time, I stay afloat.
    (Poem in a text message to my shaykh, September 2021)

This poem expressed my quest for truth, clarity, and certainty as I struggled to hold together the fragmented aspects of my self-experience in a flux of conflict between guilt, loss, and sadness. Out of sheer exhaustion, I cling to a rope of love and hope and felt a sense of ease from the reply I received from my shaykh, in which he acknowledged the researchers struggle and made a dua (prayer supplication): "May Allah ease this for you." (Cardo, 2024, pp. 105-106)

The heuristic enquiry ended with a creative synthesis depicting the transformative conclusion to the self-enquiry aspect of the research, where Islam (surrender), emaan (belief) and ihsaan (excellence) are realised in the researcher's enquiry of "being Alaq" as a convert to Islam:

An intuitive thought and image enters my mind capturing the essence of what "being seen" means to me as a convert to Islam in liminality. The image of a lighthouse is illuminated and

stays with me, "a beacon of hope", and I recall a photograph taken during the incubation phase, an image of the South Stack lighthouse on Holy Island, Holyhead, Anglesey. This lighthouse is a place I love to visit and gaze out towards the waves of conflict below. The date I took this photograph is the day before I visited the beach during the incubation phase of the research in which I reflected on the meaning of the ripples in the sand and my conversion conflict (see Al-Hubuk, *Qur'an*, Surah Adh-Dhariyat, 51:7), connect my conversion liminality to the process of illuminating my impasse which, in turn, eventually led to the revelation of my neurodivergence: an illumination of self-awareness, hope, and meaning in the darkness that was my liminal stuck- ness. For me, the lighthouse represents the possibilities of making meaning of liminality, as well as the deep penetrating experience of obtaining inner-sight (al-basirah) which I consider a "glimmering gift" from the Eternal Creator, calling out to be known:

> Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth; a likeness of His light is as a niche in which is a lamp, the lamp is in a glass, (and) the glass is as it were a brightly shining star, lit from a blessed olive-tree, neither eastern nor western, the oil whereof almost gives light though fire touch it not—light upon light—Allah guides to His light whom He pleases, and Allah sets forth parables for men, and Allah is Cognizant of all things. (*Qur'an*, Surah al-Nur, 24:35). (Cardo, 2024, p. 146)

Summary

This article has compared and considered concepts of heuristic enquiry with those of the Islamic tazkiyat-un-nafs and discovered many commonalities between both methodologies. In offering this comparative view of methodologies from different intellectual traditions and cultures, the article provides a model for researchers engaging in cross-cultural research.

For the first author, reflecting on her experience of integrating both models felt personal. She felt more seen and heard as: a Muslim, convert, British white female, psychotherapist, academic researcher, and now - as a result of her research - being a neurodivergent individual who moves "betwixt and between" the intersections of communities and cultures. However, this movement whilst practising tazkiyah concepts alongside her employment of Western qualitative research methods left her feeling resistant when she felt called to take sides. This often left her feeling at an impasse.

In Islam, one's spiritual identity (Muhsin) is greater than their cultural heritage, ethnicity, gender, neurodiversity, physical/cognitive difference or class, for it says in the *Qur'an*; "And whoever submits his face to Allah while he is a doer of good - then he has grasped the most trustworthy handhold. And to Allah will be the outcome of [all] matters"(*Qur'an*, Surah Luqman, 33:22). Faith, comprising trust, hope and love ultimately supported emotional balance whilst navigating her liminality as a convert, psychotherapist and researcher. The following extract is taken from the researcher's final reflections in the concluding chapter of her thesis:

I began this research journey uncertain as to what my focus of enquiry was or how my research would relate to the wider field of professional psychotherapy but having a strong desire to overcome an inner conflict that I had experienced most significantly since my conversion to Islam. I had tried psychotherapy to resolve my impasse and then trained as a psychotherapist to further my self-knowledge, as well as to support others. However, despite hundreds of personal therapy sessions, training, and practice as a psychotherapist I was still left with this persistent inner conflict, in which I often found myself feeling stuck. I set about an alternative way to understand and resolve these feelings, whilst still being connected with and in relation to my interests in psychotherapy and tazkiyat-un-nafs—Islamic ways toward psychological and spiritual reformation and transformation. This took the form of academic research. Heuristic enquiry became the research methodology for deeper self-enquiry (termed marifat-un-nafs in tazkiyah), of my inner conflict and stuck-ness, enabling improvement of both my practice as a Muslim and as a psychotherapist" (Cardo, 2024, p. 149).

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