

Tazkiyah Halaqa
Sel-Value – Session 37
Sheikh Adnan Rajeh
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Wellness Centre, London, Ontario

Overview

In this session, Sheikh Adnan Rajeh continues the discussion on self-value by introducing the foundational psychological and spiritual terminology that will guide the remainder of the module. The lecture focuses on the Islamic understanding of the human being, the relationship between the ruh, nafs, intellect, consciousness, and subconsciousness, and how these elements interact to shape emotional life, self-perception, and spiritual struggle. Sheikh Adnan emphasizes that much of human emotional instability stems from allowing the primitive instincts of the nafs to define self-worth instead of grounding identity in divine truth and conscious spiritual discipline.

The Uniqueness of the Islamic Psychological Framework

Sheikh Adnan explains that one of the most unique and valuable contributions of Islam is its understanding of the human being and the psychology of the soul. He argues that modern ideologies often fail to properly address the deeper spiritual and emotional realities that shape human behaviour. Islam, however, provides a complete framework for understanding:

- Why people think and behave the way they do
- Why emotional instability exists
- Why human beings constantly seek superiority and validation
- How the soul can be disciplined and purified

The Shaykh notes that many Muslims themselves have not fully understood or embraced this framework, despite its richness and depth.

The Importance of Spiritual Nomenclature

A major portion of the lecture introduces the terminology that Sheikh Adnan will use throughout the self-value module. He explains that understanding these concepts is necessary because English translations often fail to fully capture the meanings of Islamic spiritual terminology.

The Shaykh clarifies that these terms are not merely theoretical labels, but represent different dimensions of the human experience that interact continuously within every individual.

The Ruh (Spirit)

Sheikh Adnan defines the ruh as the part of the human being that comes directly from Allah. Referring to the Qur'anic description of Allah breathing into Adam from His ruh, the Shaykh explains that while the exact nature of the ruh cannot be fully understood, it represents a deeply elevated and divine connection within the human being. He emphasizes:

- The ruh is not measurable or fully explainable.
- Human knowledge regarding it is intentionally limited.
- The ruh is the source of the elevated and noble dimensions of the human being.

Because the ruh originates from Allah's command, it possesses an inherent purity and transcendence beyond ordinary material existence.

The Nafs and the Human Struggle

The central focus of the lecture is the nafs. Sheikh Adnan describes the nafs as the consciousness that emerged when the ruh became connected to the physical body. It represents the instinctive, survival-driven aspect of the human being rooted in earthly and biological impulses.

The nafs is naturally driven toward:

- Survival
- Superiority
- Praise
- Power
- Possession
- Validation
- Competition

The Shaykh explains that the nafs fundamentally interprets life through primitive survival instincts. From the perspective of the nafs:

- Being "better" than others means safety.
- Superiority appears necessary for survival.
- Praise and status feel emotionally addictive because the nafs associates them with protection and dominance.

This explains why human beings instinctively crave recognition, comparison, and emotional elevation over others.

The Pendulum of Self-Worth

Sheikh Adnan revisits the "pendulum" metaphor introduced in earlier sessions. The nafs constantly pushes the pendulum toward emotional extremes:

- Pride during success
- Insecurity during failure
- Emotional inflation through praise
- Emotional collapse through criticism

The Shaykh explains that the nafs enjoys this emotional gambling system because it constantly seeks superiority and validation. Even when individuals intellectually recognize the instability of this system, the nafs continues pulling them back toward comparison and ego-based identity.

Tazkiyah therefore involves resisting the nafs' attempt to define worth according to instinctive worldly standards.

The Continuous Need to Supervise the Nafs

A key insight of the lecture is that the nafs never fully disappears or becomes permanently safe. Even spiritually mature individuals must continuously observe and regulate it. Sheikh Adnan compares supervising the nafs to supervising a young child:

- The moment attention disappears, regression begins.
- Primitive instincts quickly re-emerge.
- The struggle remains ongoing throughout life.

He explains that the nafs naturally resists many of the teachings of tazkiyah because they challenge its deepest instincts for superiority and self-preservation.

Consciousness, Intellect, and the Subconscious

The lecture introduces several additional concepts that Sheikh Adnan will develop further in future sessions.

Al-Fu'ad (Consciousness)

The fu'ad refers to conscious awareness itself — the fact that a person experiences existence, perceives reality, and is aware of themselves and the world around them.

Al-'Aql (Intellect)

The 'aql refers to the faculty of reasoning and logical processing. It allows human beings to:

- Distinguish right from wrong
- Process information
- Make decisions
- Understand guidance

The Shaykh emphasizes that religious accountability depends upon the presence of intellect. Without 'aql, moral responsibility no longer applies.

Al-Qalb (Subconsciousness/Heart)

Sheikh Adnan describes the qalb as the subconscious dimension of the human being that absorbs emotional impressions, experiences, memories, and environmental influences indirectly.

He explains that:

- Human beings often remember how experiences felt more than the details themselves.
- The qalb absorbs emotional atmospheres continuously.
- Much of human behaviour is shaped by what the subconscious internalizes over time.

This subconscious dimension is extremely powerful and deeply influences emotional reactions, preferences, and memories.

The Conscience and Moral Awareness

The Shaykh briefly introduces the conscience, described in the Qur'an as al-nafs al-lawwamah, the self-reproaching soul. This is the inner faculty that:

- Feels guilt
- Recognizes wrongdoing
- Calls the person back toward accountability

It serves as an internal moral warning system that helps restrain destructive impulses.

Final Reflections

The session concludes with Sheikh Adnan emphasizing that understanding these spiritual and psychological dimensions is essential for meaningful tazkiyah. Without understanding the nafs and its instincts, people remain controlled by unconscious drives for superiority, validation, and emotional survival.

The believer's task is to:

- Recognize the impulses of the nafs
- Ground self-worth in Allah's truth rather than instinct
- Strengthen intellect, awareness, and spiritual discipline
- Continuously supervise the inner self

Through this ongoing process, the individual gradually moves from emotional instability and ego-driven living toward greater clarity, sincerity, and spiritual balance.

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MAuI9m5IF-c>