

On Religious Experience: A Critique of John Dewey's Notion of Religious Experience from Muslim Illuminationist Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The notion of religious experience has been debated by scholars, especially with regard to whether the religious experience is a product of human volition and whether it is universally applied to all humans regardless of their religious affiliations. John Dewey offered an interesting thought stating that religious experience was a product of human deliberation and everybody could have it, even atheists. This notion of the universality of religious experience is relatively new and worth further discussion. Therefore, this article discusses and examines Dewey's notion of religious experience by using the theory of "knowledge by presence" discussed by Muslim philosophers, ranging from Shihabuddin Suhrawardi, Mulla Sadra, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and Mehdi Ha'iri Yazdi. In this article, Muslim philosopher's epistemological explanation of knowledge is applied to understand what universality of religious experience means and how one's religious experience differs one another. This approach offers a new perspective arguing that religious experience is essentially an immediate experience of experiencing subject without any intermediation, including human volition, and it is existentially universal in the realm of feeling, not on the realm of imagination as Dewey maintained.

Keywords: Degrees of perfection, experience, feeling, imagination, knowledge by presence

INTRODUCTION

Religious experience is generally associated with the experience of pious and religious persons such ascetics, mystics, or religious scholars. Mystical experience is even considered the highest form of religious experience since human unification with God can occur presumably only in a mystical realm. John Dewey (1962) challenged such

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understanding by insisting that religious experience was more related to human experience with low flying and inclusive ideals rather than with specific supernatural beings. If one binds himself to any kind of ideals through imagination, such imaginative relation will produce effects in human life. Imagination not only helps human beings to make a connection with the ideals but also provides an experience that leads human beings to reorient and adjust their attitudes and conducts pertaining to their relationship with those ideal ends. The religious quality of experience is exactly residing in this imaginative or mental bound (between oneself with the ideals) since the original meaning of the term religion is “being bound or tied” (Dewey, 1962). A religious experience in Dewey’s mind is therefore understood in terms of these two moments: one, when a human makes a connection with the ideals through imagination; two when the imagination renders a better reorientation of human attitude and conduct. In other words, religious experience is formed by an active role of human volition through imagination and is not something given or received immediately and passively by human beings (Dewey, 1962) because human beings should, first of all, make a connection with the ideals in the aims of rendering a reorientation of their attitudes and conducts.

John Dewey argued further that this religious experience was not a monopoly of pious-religious persons. An atheist or non-pious person could also have such experience as long as he connects

himself through imagination to any kind of ideals. When someone devotes to a cause, reads or writes poetry that opens a new perspective, or dwells himself in a philosophical reflection, he certainly reaches such religious experience. In other words, religious quality of experience belongs to all sorts of experience, ranging from aesthetic, scientific, moral, political, companionship, neighborhood, friendship, to citizenship experience (Dewey, 1962). A religious experience, in other words, is considered universal; everybody is qualified to have it.

METHOD

The above accounts of religious experience are eloquently discussed in Dewey’s concise book, *A Common Faith* (1962). He departed from William James (2002) in terms of eliminating a supernatural element of religious experience. In this article, this notion of religious experience will be scrutinized through the lens of the theory of “knowledge by presence.” This is a theory that has been reintroduced and discussed by Muslim philosophers like Shihabuddin Suhrawardi, Mulla Sadra, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and Mehdi Hairi Yazdi. In addition, enriched by Friedrich Schleiermacher’s notion of religion in *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* (1893) and William James’ pragmatic approach of religious experience, the above two Dewey’s claims of religious experience is also critically examined, especially when religious experience is considered a result of human volition and is regarded universal only by

referring to a terminological root of the term “religion”. This article argues that religious experience is immediately “present” in the human mind and distinguishable by its degrees of perfection and by various human reactions derived from such experience.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Muslim Illumination Theory

Islamic epistemology is generally understood as a theory of knowledge that recognizes revelation in addition to senses, reason, and intuition as sources of knowledge (Nasr, 2000, 2006). Therefore, revelation plays an important role as proof, evidence, and source of knowledge and moral guidance in Islamic sciences such as *fiqh* (Islamic law) and *kalām* (Islamic theology). However, in this article, revelation (The Qur’an) is not used as religious proofs to argue for or against John Dewey on religious experience since they have different audiences. The Qur’an is a proof for Muslims. For them, the revelatory proofs can be employed to justify the existence of knowledge derived not only from revelation but also from senses, reason, and intuition (heart). Ismail Raji al-Faruqi (2000) in the front page of his book *al-Tawhid* cited the Qur’an, al-Nahl (16): 78, that says, “And Allah has brought you forth from your mother’s womb knowing nothing—but He has endowed you with hearing, and sight, and minds (*af’idah*, M. M. Pickthall translated this term as hearts), so you might have cause to be grateful.”

The above verse is deemed one of the revelatory pieces of evidence for the possibility of having or deriving

knowledge by using reason and heart (*af’idah*). Muslim thinkers and philosophers have been engaging their non-Muslim fellow philosophers using rational and philosophical means and inquiries. Among them are Shihabuddin Suhrawardi, Mulla Sadra (whose original name is Şadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī), Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and Mehdi Hairi Yazdi.

Suhrawardi introduced a theory of illumination (*ishrāqī*) in understanding the relationship between God with creatures with the illustration of the relationship between “The Light of Lights” and “lights”. There are four classes of light: the self-subsistent light, accidental light, barriers (*barzakh*) or dusky substance, and dark (lack of light). These classes of light are distinguishable one to another by its degrees of intensity and luminosity or its perfection and deficiency. Suhrawardi writes, “Light in itself varies in reality only by perfection and deficiency and by entities external to it” (Suhrawardi, 1920/1999). The most perfect and luminous light is called “Light of Lights,” which is actually the source and cause of all other forms of light. The relationship between “Light of Lights” and other “lights” is analogous to the sun and its rays. The closer to the sun (Light of Lights), the light is more intense and perfect whereas if it is further from the sun, the light is less luminous and darker (Suhrawardi, 1920/1999).

Suhrawardi perceived human knowledge in a similar view. If the light is divided into the light “of itself and in itself” and light “of itself but in another” (Suhrawardi,

1920/1999), human knowledge is also divided into innate knowledge and acquired knowledge. Knowledge derived from reasoning, deduction or induction, and from sensory perceptions is called acquired knowledge, not innate knowledge. Another knowledge is already “presence” in a human through a process of illumination from the Source of Knowledge, which is analogous to the process of illumination in the order of lights. This is called “innate knowledge.” He writes, “Man’s knowledge is either innate or not innate. When an unknown thing cannot be made known by pointing it out or bringing it to mind and it is something that cannot be attained by the true visions of great sages, then knowledge of it must depend on things leading to it that are in an order and that are ultimately based on innate knowledge (*fiṭrīyāt*)” (Suhrawardi, 1920/1999).

Mulla Sadra in *Kitāb al-Mashā‘ir* adopted and modified Suhrawardi’s illumination theory and translated the notion of classes of light into the gradation of being (*tashkīk al-wujūd*).¹ He wrote, “the relation between it (Necessary Being) and that which is other than it is analogous to the relation between the rays of the sun—supposing that it subsisted by itself—with the bodies that are illuminated by it and are dark in themselves. When you witness the rising of the sun in a place and the illumination of that place by its light, then

¹ To understand how Suhrawardian scholars replied to Sadrian modification, understanding and critiques of Suhrawardi’s notion of light and essence, see its discussion in an article entitled “Suhrawardi’s Ontology : From “Essence-Existence” To “Light” (Widigdo, 2014).

another light resulting from this light, you will judge that this second light is also from the sun; likewise the third light and the fourth light, until one ends with the weakest light perceptible to senses. The same is true to *wujūd* of contingent beings in which there is differentiation in their proximity and distance from the One, the Real; for everything proceeds from God” (Sadra, 1964/2014). In this regard, for Sadra, the gradation of being is analogous to Suhrawardi’s classes of light. They are differentiated one to another from its proximity and closeness to the Necessary Being, the Real, or God.

In a similar vein, well-versed of Suhrawardi’s work on light and knowledge and Sadra’s notion of gradation of being, Seyyed Hossein Nasr argued that Islamic epistemology was essentially based on what was called “direct knowledge”, which was the same as Suhrawardi’s notion of innate knowledge. Nasr (2000) wrote, “Islam is thus essentially a way of knowledge. It is a way of gnosis (*ma‘rifah*). It is based on gnosis direct knowledge that, however, cannot by any means be equated with rationalism, which is an only indirect and secondary form of knowledge. Islam leads to that essential knowledge which integrates our being, which makes us know what we are and be what we know; in other words, integrates knowledge and being in the ultimate vision of Reality” (Nasr, 2000, p. 8). In Nasr’s view, direct knowledge (*gnosis*) is derived not from rational endeavors but through the illumination of the Source of Knowledge. Mehdi Hairi Yazdi continued

and refined the above Suhrawardi's ideas of light, Sadra's gradation of being, Suhrawardi's concept of innate knowledge, and Nasr's notion of direct knowledge in his book *The Principles of Epistemology in Islamic Philosophy* (1992) by introducing what was called "knowledge by presence." In the context of Yazdi's (1992) theory of "knowledge by presence (KBP)", the act of knowing involves three important elements: the knowing subject, the object known, and the act of knowing. The term "subject" signifies the mind that performs the act of knowledge and the term "object" refers to the thing or the proposition known by that subject. The relation between these two elements called the act of knowing (Yazdi, 1992). For the purpose of our analysis, however, the discussion on the object of knowledge is more relevant. The existence of the object of knowledge will determine whether certain knowledge belongs to "knowledge by correspondence" or "knowledge by presence". This understanding of knowledge is subsequently useful to understand "religious experience" from Islamic epistemology perspective, by means of which John Dewey's notion of religious experience will be critically engaged.

If the object of knowledge resides outside the human mind, the object is called an objective object, transitive object or external object. Knowledge derived from it is called knowledge by correspondence (KBC). This external object is initially independent and unknown to the subject of knowledge because it is beyond the reach

of the human mind. In order to make the act of knowing possible, according to Yazdi (1992), there must be a mental existence of the same object that resides within the human mind. This mental existence is called subjective object, immanent object or internal object. The act of knowing occurs when the mental existence of the object has a correspondence with the material existence of the object. The relation between these two kinds of an object is, therefore, a correspondence relationship, not existential relationship, as a catalog with the things that are being cataloged. The knowledge that derived from this kind of correspondence relationship is called knowledge by correspondence, in which the internal object plays "an intermediary representation role in the achievement of the act of knowing" (Yazdi, 1992).

Another kind of knowledge by correspondence is what Bertrand Russell (1967) called "knowledge by acquaintance" (KBA). Knowledge in this regard results from an acquaintance of the knowing subject with "the appearance" of the object known, not with the real object of knowledge itself. The acquaintance renders two moments: first, the moment of acquaintance itself, which is free from true-false dualism, second, the moment of inference or the description of the acquaintance, which is subject to a possibility of true and false (Russell, 1967). Russell (1967) provided the following example;

In the presence of my table, I am acquainted with the sense-data that make up the appearance

of my table—its color, shape, hardness, smoothness, etc., all these are things of which I am immediately conscious when I am seeing and touching my table... My knowledge of the table as a physical object, on the contrary, is not direct knowledge. Such as it is, it is obtained through acquaintance with the sense-data that make up the appearance of the table. We have seen that it is possible, without absurdity, to doubt whether there is a table at all, whereas it is not possible to doubt the sense-data. (Russell, 1967).

Unlike knowledge by correspondence (KBC) and knowledge by acquaintance (KBA), knowledge by presence (KBP) is not built upon an acquaintance with the external object or with the “appearance” of the external object, but upon acquaintance with internal sensations and feelings. This can only occur when the object of knowledge is present directly without intermediation in the mind of the knowing subject. An empirical example of this knowledge is our experience with pain or pleasure. Shihabuddin Suhrawardi provided an example of a man who was in pain from a cut of from damage to one of his organs (Suhrawardi, 1945).

A Brief Biography of Mehdi Hairi Yazdi and John Dewey

Mehdi Hairi Yazdi (1923-1999) is an Iranian prominent scholar that occupies an important place in Islamic scholarship

circle and philosophy. He was born in Qom in the year of 1923 in Qom, Iran, and died in the same city in the year of 1999. He was one of sons of Abd al-Karim Hairi Yazdi, a prominent Shi‘i cleric in Islam, who was the teacher of Ayatollah Komeini, the leader of Iranian Revolution. After spending an early scholarly career in his home country from studying Islamic sciences and philosophy in seminaries to completing a doctorate degree in 1953, he moved to the United States in 1953. In this period, the political atmosphere in Iran was unstable. The popular Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh was overthrown by the monarchical leader, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. Mehdi decided to migrate to the United States of America to learn and engage with Western philosophy. After working in some institutions, including teaching Eastern Existentialist Philosophy in Georgetown University, he moved to Canada completing another doctorate degree in the field of analytic philosophy in the University of Toronto in 1979. He wrote a dissertation and published it under the title *The Principles of Epistemology in Islamic Philosophy: Knowledge by Presence* (1992). This work is one of the central objects of this article’s discussion and one of his intellectual legacies in addition to *Kavushha-yi ‘adl-I Nazari* (1968) on “theoretical reason”, *Haram-I hasti: tahlili az mabadi-yi hasti shinasi-yi tatbiqi* (1980) on “comparative ontology between the Western and Islamic philosophical tradition”, *Kavushha-yi ‘aql-I ‘amali: falsafah-yi akhlaq* (1980) on “practical reason and ethics”, and *Hekmat and Hokumat* (1995) on “philosophy and government” (Jaffer, 2018).

John Dewey (1859-1952) is an American thinker and philosopher, whose ideas and works are influential in the field of philosophy, psychology, education, politics, and religious studies. He was born in October 1859, and died on June 1, 1952. At the age of mid-twenties, he taught philosophy at the University of Michigan. In 1880, he started to teach and undergo an intellectual career at the University of Chicago for ten years (1894-1904). At Chicago, assisted by some other philosophers, he founded American functional psychology. In 1904, Dewey went to Columbia and became a philosopher of democracy. In 1910, he was the fourth psychologist to be elected—as a scientist—to the National Academy of Sciences. In 1930, he was the first William James Lecturer in Philosophy and Psychology at Harvard University (Boring, 1953). Throughout his life, Dewey wrote several important books, including *A Common Faith*, *Art as Experience* (1934), *Liberalism and Social Action* (1935), *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (1938), and *Experience and Education*, *Freedom and Culture*, *Theory of Valuation* (1939). *The underlying philosophy of John Dewey emphasizes on the importance of human experience, organic and naturalistic account of metaphysics, and human betterment in general* (Hildebrand, 2018).

Dewey's Notion of Religious Experience and its Western Interlocutors

1. Religious Experience and Religious Acquaintance. In Dewey's account, religious quality of experience is determined

by one's relationship with the ideals; first, whether he is able to intentionally connect himself through imagination with those ideals, second, whether such imaginative connection renders a reorientation, adjustment, and betterment of life or not. Unlike Dewey who perceives religion and religiousness based on one's connection with ideals, Friedrich Schleiermacher views religion in a different way. He perceives it as intuition and feeling of the Whole. If the understanding of religion and religiousness in John Dewey's concept assumes the role of human volition and intentionality in order to establish a bond with the ideals, in Schleiermacher's understanding, human volition and intentionality have limited, even zero, role in generating the essence of religion or religiousness. For, Schleiermacher, religion is essentially contemplative and passive (Schleiermacher, 1893).

In the context of religious experience, if the moment of experience in Dewey's work is intermediated by the role of imagination—namely when the subject makes a connection with the ideals and when the ideals render an adjustment and reorientation on the subject—, Schleiermacher challenges this concept by stating that this moment of experience is lack of immediateness. The imagination for Schleiermacher is not intermediation between the subject and the object of experience, but the highest faculty of man where he/she can be “impressed with the feeling of omnipotence” (Schleiermacher, 1893).

The immediateness of religious experience in Schleiermacher's theory can be inferred from his understanding of the nature of religion, which is intuition and feeling. Intuition is understood as the objective pole of religiousness, in which the Whole acts upon an individual subject, just like a "heat" that acts upon our thumb. The feeling is perceived as the subjective pole of religiousness, in which the individual subject experiences action of the Whole, which can be illustrated by the "hot" felt in our thumb. The immediateness of religious experience for Schleiermacher occurs in both intuition and feeling because there is no intermediation between the Whole and the individual subject in both processes. However, based on Schleiermacher explanation, the real moment of religious experience occurs not in the process of "intuition," but in the moment of "feeling", where the duality of the Whole and the individual disappears. The only thing left is feeling, the trace of the Whole on an individual subject, just like the feeling of "hot" in the thumb that is rendered by the heat's action.

Schleiermacher writes,

The sum total of religion is to feel that, in its highest unity, all that moves us in feeling is one; to feel that aught single and particular is only possible by means of this unity: to feel, that is to say, that our being and living is being and living in and through God. (Schleiermacher, 1893).

Informed by the above Schleiermacher's account on the "passive" character of religion and the immediateness of feeling, John Dewey's understanding of religious experience could be regarded as an intellectualistic account of religious experience, instead of a non-intellectual account of it. It means that he still attempted to explain the religious experience that assumed the separation between the subject and the object of experience which then needed to be bridged through intermediation. John Dewey called the intermediation between the subject of experience and the object of experience (i.e. ideals) as imagination. It might be fair to regard such imaginative bound with the ideals as religious. However, for me, this kind of bound is not an experience (religious experience) but an acquaintance (religious acquaintance).

In Russell's notion of acquaintance that was discussed earlier, the subject is acquainted with the "appearances" of the sense-data of external objects like the color, shape, hardness, or smoothness of the table. In the case of John Dewey's notion of ideals and their relationship with the subject, the acquaintance occurs when the subject is acquainted with inclusive ideals through imagination. For example, a young painter is inspired to work on his masterpiece after attending a painting exhibition where he sees the works of great painters. He decides to start a new and different genre that he considers better than the existing schools of painting. The image of this new painting genre resides in his mind and compels him

to work hard to embody it in his canvas. In this regard, there are two moments of acquaintances: first, when the young artist is acquainted with appearances of physical objects, namely shapes, colors, or structures of the paintings in the exhibition; second, he is also acquainted with the ideal type of the physical object, namely the image of new painting genre. The subject here is not only acquainted with the appearance of the painting works but also with the ideals that are considered compelling.

Acquaintance is different from experience. Informed by the theory of “knowledge by presence” explained above, experience belongs to the order of beings, not to the order of conceptions. Experience is existential in which the subject and the object of experience is blended and united. Dilthey (1976) explained this existential understanding of experience in the following,

Consciousness of experience is one with its content just as subjectivity is one with its subject; the experience is not an object which confronts the person who has it, its existence for me cannot be distinguished from what is presented to me. (Dilthey, 1976).

If someone is experiencing pain from a cut in a finger, for instance, the feeling of pain is not the same with the shape or the size of the cut that he witnesses. The feeling of pain (as the object of experience) is within the subject’s consciousness, blended with the subject’s existence at the time when

he is experiencing the pain. Therefore, the acquaintance with the pain is different from the experience of it since the acquaintance is more related with the appearance or the sense-data of the cut in the finger, whereas the experience is related with the feeling of pain itself. In this sense, labeling John Dewey’s notion of religious experience with “religious acquaintance” is plausible since the ideal is actually acquainted, not experienced, by the subject. This label can be also applied to Schleiermacher’s notion of intuition. By means of intuition, the individual subject is actually acquainted with the Whole although it happens in a passive way. The real religious experience, therefore, takes place in the realm of feeling in which the subject and the object of experience is inseparably united.

2. The Universality of Religious Experience. If religious experience belongs to the realm of feeling, it must be universal. Everyone is qualified to have it regardless of his/her religion or religiosity since everyone can experience pain, pleasure, sadness, or happiness. However, the debate rises when a religious experience is placed in the relation between the subject and the ideals, and, when it is understood in terms of human attitudes and reactions towards the ideals.

John Dewey (1962) maintained that religious experience was universal and common to all human beings in two senses. One, religious experience was universal in the sense that an individual could make a form of relationship with any kind of ideals, not only limited to a religious

divinity or supernatural being. Anybody, regardless of his/her religious or non-religious backgrounds, could build such a religious relationship with any forms of ideal. Two, when someone was bound mentally to certain ideals—be it aesthetic, philosophical, scientific, moral, political, companionship or friendship ideal—, his/her general attitudes towards such ideals also qualified as religious. These general attitudes are considered universal as well in the sense that they render common effects on human beings, either in the forms of an adjustment, reorientation, adaptation, or accommodation. In the end, the difference between religious and natural/secular experience is irrelevant because all mental attitudes towards any ideals are perceived as a religious experience.

William James (2002) on the contrary provided a negative answer to the above question based on the fact that experience could be religious only if it was related to religious feelings resulted from the relationship with “the more” and it should also derive healthy-minded attitudes. Although at a glance he acknowledges that an individual can experience union with “the more” in an inclusive sense, in reality, he confines “the more” to divine beings. The divine in this context should be understood in terms of a primal reality, which is confined to the divinity understood by religious adherents. To this kind divinity, the individual should “feel impelled to respond to solemnly and gravely” (James, 2002). The solemn response, however, should be

transformative, not passive, in the sense that it can help the individual to cope with his/her wrongness, uneasiness, guilt, or deficiency. In other words, human connections and responses to the more should render a healthy-minded attitude and orientation. If they do not lead to the healthy-mindedness, they cannot be regarded as religious. Therefore, religious experience in William James’s theory is not universal in two aspects. First, religious experience is only derived from the individual relationship with the more or the divine in a supernaturalist understanding.² As a result, although he did not discuss comparatively the existence of natural experience in addition to religious experience, he recognized the distinction between the two kinds of experience, the religious and the natural one (James, 2002). Second, religious experience does not belong to all human beings. It belongs only to religious people who experience religious feelings and religious impulses that render a healthy-minded attitude and orientation.

Critical Analysis on Dewey: Illuminism Perspective

Influenced by neo-Platonic illumination theory that employs the parable of the Sun and its rays in order to explain the order

² He said, “If one should make a division of all thinkers into naturalists and supernaturalists, I should undoubtedly have to go, along with the most philosophers, into the supernaturalist branch.” This means that he associates himself with those who regards religious experience, which resulted from the relationship with the supernatural divinity, should be classified differently from the experience derived from natural/secular ideals (James, 2002).

of beings (Suhrawardi, 1920/1999),³ I will explain the notion of feeling as the nature of religious experience in an analogous order. The Whole (of Schleiermacher), the ideals (of Dewey), and the more (of James) are considered the Source of feelings, resembling the Sun as the source of light, heat, and hot altogether. The Sun emanates its rays in different levels of intensity into the universe; therefore, the higher rank of lights is to be distinguished from the lower ranks of lights based on their degrees of intensity. The closer we are towards the Sun, the more intense light we will find; and the further we are from the sun, the less intense light we will encounter. In the same fashion, the Source of feelings derives lower ranks of feeling through the process of emanation and analogously one is to be distinguished from another based on their degrees of perfection. The closer we are towards the Source of feelings, we will experience the more perfect feeling; and the further we are from the Source of the feelings we will experience the less perfect feeling.

In this regard, there are two movements of the feeling: the descending and the ascending movement. The descending reflects a process of emanation from the Source of feelings, which is the most perfect one, to the lower ranks of feeling that are

less perfect. To a believer, for example, the religious feeling of the saints is probably seen to be more perfect and powerful rather than the laity's feeling since the saints are considered closer to the Source of feelings (i.e. God). In addition, maestros like Leonardo Da Vinci have certainly a higher degree of feeling perfection compared to their followers or interpreters because the maestros are closer to the Source of feelings (the ideal, which is perhaps the ideal type of beauty in their work).

The ascending movement of feeling, however, denotes absorption of the feeling into a higher degree of perfection. If an individual wants to have a more perfect and powerful religious feeling, he/she can make him/herself closer to the Source of feelings and let her/himself absorbed into the realm of feeling. A mystic may perform certain spiritual exercises for this purpose. A writer may need a retreat to gain a mood, feeling, that brings her/him to the Source of feelings (e.g. the ideal type of writing).

Briefly speaking, the feeling can be perceived as diverse with regards to its degrees of perfection. However, regardless of its multiple degrees of perfection, all feelings are existentially still connected to the Source of feelings because the lower ranks of feeling are a manifestation of the Source and dependent on It. In other words, they are actually in "a strictly existential unity" (Yazdi, 1992).

In addition, these feelings are also diversified and particularized within individual subjects when they are accompanied and followed by human

³ Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrāwardī, the founder of this theory, maintains that the Light of Lights engenders the lower light by means of illumination just like the Sun and its rays. The order of existence is similar to the order of light, in which the First Existence derives the lower existence by means of illumination. In addition, "the Light of Lights and the first light results from It are only to be distinguished by perfection and deficiency."

reactions. There are at least three kinds of human reaction derived from these feelings: intellectual reaction, affective reaction, and emanative reaction. The intellectual reaction refers to (re)action that is influenced more by human volition rather than feeling. A calculation of reason based on human voluntary action carries more weight than an exercise of feeling. In turn, human agency is obtained not through a submission to the power of feeling but through human volition, free will, and intentionality. John Dewey's notion of human attitudes towards the ideals to some extents represents this kind of intellectual reactions.

John Dewey (1962) explained that the actual religious quality in the experience was measured by "the effect that is produced, the better adjustment in life and its conditions, not the manner and cause of its production." He went on to elaborate that the effects on an individual subject from his/her relationship with ideals in three different terms: accommodation, adaptation, and adjustment. "Accommodation" is the terms used to denote a passive and submissive attitude towards certain conditions. If there are conditions that cannot be changed, our attitudes will be modified in accordance with them. For example, changes in weather make us have to accommodate ourselves to it (Dewey, 1962). "Adaptation" is more active attitudes towards the conditions. When there are conditions that seem to challenge and hamper our wants and purposes, we will react against such conditions and modify them to meet our wants, demands, and purposes (Dewey, 1962).

Dewey (1962) called the general name of both accommodation and adaptation as "adjustment." In the process of adjustment, there are changes in our attitudes towards the world but they are not imposed by unchangeable objective conditions and also not driven by our subjective wants and demands. There is a higher cause that renders such changes, which is called an inclusive ideal. These changes of attitudes result from inclusive causes/ideals and take place in different persons in many ways. Dewey provides an example of the changes that are produced by devotion to a cause, by a passage of poetry that opens a new perspective, or by philosophical reflection. However, in addition to the changes in ourselves, the conditions surrounding us are also undergoing certain modifications. They are also arranged, settled, in relation to enduring changes in our being. It means that the adjustment of human attitudes that renders changes of the surrounding circumstances may have an element of submission (which may be seen from the changes in our attitude in accordance to the ideals); but, according to Dewey (1962), "it is voluntary, not externally imposed." For example, I voluntarily become an environmental activist that aims to prevent the worsening of global warming. Accordingly, I ride my bike more frequently to go to work, use electricity more wisely, and bring recyclable trashes to the recycling center more often. My house is also installed with solar energy instead of the energy that is based on oil. The trees and plants surrounding my house will be cultivated

better in order to contribute to the supply of oxygen in the air. I will also promote this kind of lifestyle to my neighbors and friends. This example, in the end, shows that the adjustment of human attitudes is a result of human volition and intentionality, not a product of the force of feeling.

The second reaction towards feeling is the affective reaction. This reaction denotes an action that is influenced by both feeling and human agency altogether. Schleiermacher describes two elements of religious life, which one of them is regarded as the affective response to a feeling. The first element is when man surrenders himself to the Universe and allows himself to be influenced by the side of it that is turned towards him. The second is when he transplants this contact which is one definite feeling, within, and takes it up into the inner unity of his life and being (Schleiermacher, 1893). The later element is called the affective reaction to feeling while the former is the feeling itself. In calling it affective, it is not meant that the reaction depends only on feeling but also depends on human subjectivity that has a particular interest, purpose, and volition. When both feeling and human subjectivity are combined and united, the result will be an action that springs from the unity of feeling and human volition. Schleiermacher writes, "From this inner unity, action springs of its own accord, as a natural branch of life. As we agreed, activity is a reaction of feeling, but the sum of activity should only be a reaction to the sum of feeling..." (Schleiermacher, 1893).

William James' description of how religious attitude should reflect such affective reaction as well. The contact with the divine for James should result in a powerful feeling that impels an individual to respond with solemnity, seriousness, and tenderness. If the result is feeling of pleasure, it must not be expressed in grin or snicker or if the result is feeling of sadness, it must not be responded by either scream or curse. He asserts, "The divine shall mean for us only in such primal reality as the individual feels impelled to respond to solemnly and gravely, and neither by a curse nor a jest." (James, 2002). Interestingly, such solemn respond to a feeling of the divine, according to James, is not for the sake of feeling itself. He goes on to insist that religiosity is measured through the use of such unity of feeling and solemn response, which is for coping with our uneasiness and wrongness (James, 2002).

In addition to the above intellectual and affective reactions, another human response towards feeling is called emanative reaction. In this respect, the power of feeling is dominating the influence of human volition. The superiority of feeling is overwhelming to the extent that human agency seems to have no role except the role of supporting the development of feeling. This category of reactions is very useful to explain the actions of mystics and those who endeavor to unite with the Source of feelings. The mystics, for example, may recite mantras, develop certain exercises, or perform spiritual practices in order to abandon their material and intellectual interests so that

they can immerse themselves into the world of feeling. Interestingly, those mantras, exercises, and practices are also products of feeling that is overwhelming inside a human subject.

CONCLUSION

John Dewey introduces an interesting idea of commonality of human beings, which in the context of religious experience lies upon the inclusivity of ideals and the universality of human attitudes to these ideals. However, from the above discussion, we can derive some interesting conclusions that differ from John Dewey's exposition regarding religious experience. First, religious experience essentially belongs to the order of being and not s belongs to the order of conception because the relation between the experiencing subject and the object experienced is existential, not representational or referential. The object is immediately present in the subject and is not represented or intermediated by any kind of intermediations. Second, the essential elements of religious experience are feeling because the existential experience occurs only in the realm of feeling in which the subject and the object of experience is united. Third, the feeling is derived from the process of emanation of the Source of feelings, not through the process intuiting (Schleiermacher) or imaginative connection with the ideals (Dewey and James). Fourth, human volition has a limited role in religious experience because the source of the agency is not human beings, but the Source of feelings (which may be called God, ideals,

divinities, the Whole, or the more). The role of the human is to react and to respond to the action or to the emanative power of feeling. Fifth, the feeling is universal and common to all human beings. It is only to be distinguished by its degrees of perfection and different human reactions attached to it.

Accordingly, this article finds some issues in Dewey's exposition on religious experience. First, religious experience in the account of John Dewey is essentially religious acquaintance because the subject of experience is not directly experiencing the object of experience (i.e. ideals). The subject is in fact acquainted with the representation of the ideals through intermediation, namely imagination. Second, religious experience in Dewey's account is derived from human intentionality and volition pertaining to external objects and is not rendered by an immediate presence of the object in the individual subject. Therefore, instead of considering feeling as the nature of religious experience, Dewey regards human attitudes towards the ideals as the main factor of religious experience, which is proven to be incorrect. Third, the universality and commonality of religious experience is evidently not located in the inclusivity of ideals or in human responses in the forms of human adjustment in life. The universality of religious experience resides in the realm of feeling. Fourth, in the realm of human responses towards a feeling or towards ideals, there is a plurality of religious experiences. The feeling is sometimes followed by intellectual reactions, sometimes accompanied by affective

reactions, and sometimes strengthened by emanative reactions. John Dewey seems to be unaware of such different forms of religious experience.

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