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# Review of the Effect of Non-Epistemic Factors on Religious Belief from the Perspective of William James

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**Abstract**

*Today, one of the important issues in the field of epistemology is the impact of non-epistemic factors on human religious belief. William James (1842-1919) is the first one who attributed only one factor among the eight to have influence on the belief development process to reasoning and considered the other seven factors non-epistemic. He suggested that human beliefs are formed in light of non-epistemic factors. According to his viewpoints, religion and religious beliefs are phenomena belonging to the human psyche dimension which is inner and individual. He considered religion to be associated with human emotional dimension rather than ideological one. This paper will identify that William James considers religion only a subset of emotional issues and suggests that the impact of non-epistemic factors on religious beliefs is*

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*very high. However, emotion and thought cannot be separated from each other. With reference to religious texts such as the Quran, we realize that the intellectual cognition is important in the faith parallel to emotional dimensions, and one is not merely affected by emotions in accepting the religious content but also she makes a choice using her thought. In this paper, we attempt to clarify whether the development process of human beliefs is formed apart from non-epistemic dimensions, or human existential dimensions (yet differentiated from each other) are in such interaction with each other that one cannot simply determine that the epistemic dimension is independent from other dimensions so the epistemic or emotional dimensions of human belief cannot enter the cognition domain in an independent manner.*

**Keywords***: existential dimensions, non-epistemic factors, religious beliefs, William James,*

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## Introduction

Epistemology and the related areas have been so long the concern of human's mind. Going deep into it led to the emergence of one branch of philosophy called 'Epistemology". Epistemology or theory of knowledge is a branch of philosophy dealing with Analysis of nature of belief, limit, benefits, and value of epistemology (Fūlādī, 2002, p. 39)

There are three types of epistemology:

1. Knowing that, or propositional Knowledge that is dependent of proposition by which we can add to our knowledge.
2. Knowing how, which is applied and practical knowledge in which individuals gain knowledge of how to act.
3. Object Knowledge, which is the knowledge of things and objects. However by knowledge we mean the first type of knowledge (Parkinson, 1983, p.123)

Now, if someone claims to have knowledge, what components should we then be looking for in his words to see him qualified of this knowledge? A simple analysis can make clear that the claimant of knowledge must have the three following features

a. The person must believe in Propositional knowledge (P)
b. That (P) must be true
c. The person must have reason for his or her (P)

Thus, according to epistemologists, knowledge is only obtained when it is justified true belief (Malekīān, 2002). Since talking about the components of knowledge needs a long discussion, we just deal with the *belief* as this research is aimed to study the effects of non-epistemic factors on religious believes in a sense that knowledge is not possible without belief. This is the belief that crates the facts and belief in knowledge is a central and crucial part.

## Analysis of 'nature of belief'

When a hypothesis comes to one, three states would occur: acceptance, rejection and withhold. Belief is the same as the acceptance state before the content of a hypothesis. Every hypothesis has two links: links with interior and links with exterior. For example in the statement "The pencil is green." There is a relation with the outside which is true or false. There also have a link inside the absence of which there will be no knowledge hence. This is the second link with which the belief is formed (ibid.)

## Belief and Truth

If we say "B is true" or "I believe B is true", in the first sentence the exterior side turned into a proposition and is a statement of reality. But in the second one we believe proposition in its verity while the exterior verity of it is probable.

Current epistemology aims at the second type of propositions. Epistemology in 20th century deals with the beliefs and seeks to know the reasons behind each belief in people. This is in contrast with logic that deals with the verity of propositions; and this is the point in which the logic differs from epistemology. Thus, Examining the accuracy or falsehood of a proposition is related to ground analysis and logic and the reason of its acceptance is in the territory of epistemology. In other words, any propositions can be looked at from two views; "logical and epistemological". According to logical view, logic itself and its relation with outside world is triggered, while from epistemological view, the reasons for a belief is of importance (Malekīān, 2001, p. 25).

## Voluntary and passive believes

One of the important issues ahead of us regarding the belief system is the question of whether we are passive or volunteer in choosing our

believes. In other words, what is the role of volition in our beliefs?! Does it have any role at all?! In the history of philosophy, there are two different theories regarding this. One of them is Descartes' theory which says admission is optional. The other one is Hume's in which belief is an emotive state (Paul, 1975. p. 345). Hume's theory regards belief as an emotive feeling like love and hate which we should get along with them. But according to Descartes, admission is an optional motif that can be either accepted or rejecting freely (Avicenna, 2006, p. 208).

Each of the aforementioned theories can have their own justifications. For example accepting or rejecting an idea consciously can prove what Descartes and his followers proposed as well people are responsible for their deeds; punishing or awarding them are all a sign for their freewill. While on the other side, the good nature of belief or the very strong determination on a belief cannot be a justification for committing the act (Nazarnejad, 2004). There are also some other theories in middle in comparison to Hume's and Descartes'; this two theories are two sides of an extreme. This other theories though accepting volition in belief creation, do not consider it the main factor. In addition, cognitive activities can be to a large extent involuntary, yet we can't ignore the effect of volition in formation of a belief. It means as soon as one accepts or rejects a proposition, they find it compatible with their will and desires. In overall consideration, they pay more attention to those propositions and involve their emotional and optional sides. Another aspect of this discussion reveals in discriminating the 'reason' and 'cause' as well as indiscriminating them in a way that some consider 'reason' in the area of logical process and 'cause' in the illogical area.

They regard non-epistemic matters – including every illogical issue – like political, social and mental matters are of the 'reason'; it is said some of our deeds have their reasons and some of them are caused. It means men sometimes act reasonably and sometimes without any reasons and just being inspired by exterior elements of their beliefs. For example sometimes we deny 'X' according to our logical or emotional believes, and sometimes we deny it for just being opposed to someone. In the former, we have a reason for our beliefs but in the latter, they are caused.

Here the supposition is upon looking at 'reason' and cause differently, while 'cause' can be part of the reason. Then we can divide the reasons into two categories of logical and illogical ones. In the article of 'The Will to Believe' written by William James, the illogical causes that are the non-epistemic factors were indicated. The result of this discussion i.e.,

Voluntary and passive believes will clearly manifest itself in the ethics of belief and ideological areas of human beings. In this regard, if we consider the beliefs optional, it is then that we have to believe in a series of responsibilities in our belief that we call it the 'ethics of belief' (Hick, 2002, p. 138).

## Ethics of Belief and Epistemic Responsibilities

English scholar Clifford (1904-1988) is the first one ever looked for the kinds of ideas that can or cannot be defended and types of ideas that should or should not be dealt with. He wrote a book called 'ethics of belief' which turned famous later on especially when William James gathered and followed Clifford's ideas.

James in his article 'The Will to Believe' restated Clifford's ideas and confirmed his thoughts in that morally we are not to follow any ideologies. He states we can carry different titles and for each of them there is a set of moral responsibilities. One of our titles is being 'thoughtful' and this is why we are provided with responsibilities which are called rational responsibilities (Malekīān, 2001, p. 14). If we get a belief without any reason, then what is our responsibility? If we believe it, we may fall into a trap of false hypothesis, and if we reject it we may miss a true hypothesis. There are three points of view: in the first view it is important not to miss any hypothesis; According to this, we should accept any idea unless those proven unreasonable. Followers of this would suppose that accepting an idea is more reasonable than rejecting it.

In the second view, the supposition is based on the fact that any hypothesis is false unless we find a valid reason not to. And finally in the third view, we are to suspend any hypothesis unless there is a contrary claim. William James in his article 'The Will to Believe' brought this in mind that both principles should be taken together.

Firstly it means to miss no true hypothesis; and secondly, to take no false hypothesis. According to William James our first true reaction facing a proposition must be suspension[1]. At the next stage, after providing evidences that whether men are morally free to either accept or reject a proposition, Clifford claimed in cases there are enough evidences to accept a proposition, rejecting is not reasonable then (Eshkavarī, 1998).

## Rationality & Irrationality of religious belief

Now this is under question: 'Is religious belief rational or a complete irrational process the same as Pascal's conditionals, Wittgenstein and Kierkegaard's mere theism, or is it related to both?'

Before dealing with this subject which is the main point here, it is necessary to introduce the existential areas of humankind and then to discover their probable effects on human ideologies and believes.

Today the theory of Tetnes (Johann Nicolas,1807-1736) the German philosopher and psychologist, who for the first time provides humankind with tree aspects of ideological, emotional and volitive is approved amongst epistemologists. Before this theory, humans were regarded a combination of epistemic and optional aspects and their metaphysical constraints were connected to either the science or volition. But Titchener in his theory considered human emotions a separate entity and unrelated to science and volition; however, Human beings are an animate with believes, emotions, and desires (Avicenna, 2006, pp. 33-34).

On this field Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski along with Wainwright opposed strongly the philosophers who believe ideology must be independent of emotions and must form through rationality. She in return exclaimed that we must further think of whether this emotional process leads to truth or not!? In other words, the process of developing believes and ideas must be taken into consideration to see what processes the belief had gone through in its formation and do this processes lead to truth or not?! ?! (Zagzebski[2], 1996; Wainwright, 1995).

Here is a short summary of these aspects.

A. Ideological aspect: This aspect is the origin of thought, ideas, knowledge, reasoning, theories, mental and logical framings, acceptance and rejection, negation and proof of evidence.

B. Emotional aspect: it deals with interactions, effeteness and emotions. The central point here is satisfaction or dissatisfaction of events and its pleasure and troubles for human beings. This aspect is useful for transferring the potential knowledge into practical knowledge. Humans are affected by it before taking any intentional action. Contrary to what it used to be, it is no longer of science or belief nor of volition, rather is it of interactional aspect. Titchener is the first one who discovered this aspect. As a result, we are flowed in an emotional state when something attracts or impresses us.

C. Volitive aspect: This aspect is the origin of desires, wishes, tendencies, intentions, decisions and humans' conscious behaviors.

Volition occurs when there is a series of options; you have to choose thoughtfully between them, and its conscious behavior is where there is different thought in mind alongside. It can be noted; volition is by no means focusing on an idea and preserving it in mind in a way that any other action is rejected rather it includes a wider circle which covers tendencies, intents and desires. Analyzing the effect of non-epistemic factors on knowledge and truth must be considered in these three fields (Avicenna, 2006, p. 137).

Many philosophers due to some of the negative effects of human's emotions and desires have tried to prove epistemic aspect independent of volitive and emotional aspects. But on this issue Zagzebski inspired by William James tried to show the mere involvement of desires do not bring negative effects by itself; rather they have positive impacts as well. She also tried to show if these epistemic procedures lead to truth or avert from it? In other words in the process of finding the truth we cannot just emphasize on belief itself and the justification behind it; we have to think the psychological and moral aspect too, which guides us to the fact that what processes does the belief go through in its formation and does it have a way to truth or not?! All of these analyses are based on the fact that it is not possible to separate the ideological aspect from the other two aspects.

In sum, for approving the three aspects in human beings (epistemic, emotional and volitive) it must be noted that we pass three stages facing a dependent of knowledge:

1. We know the dependent;
2. It may be satisfactory for us or may not;
3. We tend either to preserve or change it.

These three phases exists in any knowledge.

Some believe humans explore the world by his mind and in cases that they involve their emotions and wishes, they can go far from the reality. This is why they keep ideological aspect independent of emotional and volitive aspects of humans.

## William James's basis of thought

William James is well-known among those who are interested in psychology of religion since he is a psychologist who believes in validity of religious experience and found religion the most important experience in life. James' basis of thought is appropriate here for our discussion- has three philosophical, epistemological and psychological aspects that will

be explained in this article.

## Philosophical Basis (Pragmatism)

To understand pragmatism, we just need to find the sequence of objective and practical effects one can have to illustrate an idea?! It means that for extending a subjective concept, it is firstly necessary to define what kind of behavior does this concept lead to?! Then James came up with this idea that 'the only job of a philosopher is to discover if a given idea is true about something, then what changes it would made on our lives?!

James said what philosophy must do is to make clear what influence a theory can have on our lives if it is true or not? A belief is true as long as it is useful in our life. Actually James defended any kinds of ideas which guarantee men's virtue and blessings and found reality what brings satisfaction. He says: we cannot reject any ideas which have beneficial effects on our life. If believing in God and religious thought operates satisfactorily, then it is true Those thoughts that support us to find a satisfactory relationship with the other part of our experience are true; A belief is true as long as it is helpful. (Russell, 1997, p. 1105)

William James in 'the Will to Believe' writes: When we can't decide what to choose between opposing ideas, it is better to believe the one which would bring long-lasting satisfactory results. In his doctrine reality and usefulness are mixed together while usefulness is a non-epistemic factor affecting our belief and James strongly emphasizes on it. Besides emphasizing on rational reasoning of a proposition i.e., having a logical reason about for and against of a hypothesis, he also emphasizes on psychological satisfaction which is of non-logical aspects. For example religious belief is regarded useful because it provides us with calmness and is useful because it lets us free of infinite responsibilities in a way that we believe world is controlled by the betters. So according to Pragmatism, when we are to choose a belief we had better choose one which is more compatible with our character and nature, supposing that the agreeable and opposing reasons of religious believes are the same though James found them unequal (James,1980).

## Epistemic basis (will propensity)

James believes in free will in routine life and regards humankind active in their beliefs and when there is no rational reason instead of suspension, it is this belief that leads to free will because of some other

reasons. He wrote, our mind products are the results of our selection from the emotional data. According to James, we often have to decide even though there are not enough logical bases since even no decision is a kind of decision in itself; As James says religious issues are also under the same rules in a sense that we can go through the ideological ways unless we are not satisfied logically (ibid, pp. 1105-1110).

## Psychological basis (human existential areas)

James attempted to consider religion a psychological phenomenon and relate it to emotional area with introducing humankind's existential areas (ideological, sentimental and epistemic). In his 'The Will to Believe' he stated, when the logical reasons are not sufficient (regarding religious belief), our emotional and volitive areas come in and we decide either of them (James, 1978, p.11). He found the deepest resource of religion emotional and further pointed out: religion is of emotional category and not mind. His reasons are stated as:

First, religious manners is a tangible quality and is immediate to the subject, therefore the result will not be deduced. Second, people do not often contemplate over rational reasons; thus, religious belief is rooted in emotion and experience. Third, back to the religious practices as he reviewed indicated that religious belief is variant while emotion, the basis of this variety is stable. Hence, to realize the common points in various practices, emotion and experience is to be sought and not mind.

The statement of the problem of non-epistemic effects on cognition in his article 'The Will to Believe' made epistemologists contemplate that acquiring cognition is not just through epistemic manners and facts, rather there are many believes influenced by scare, hope, love, hate, and personal and social benefits, etc. and purifying non-epistemic areas with the evils and filling that with goodness can help finding the truth. In a nutshell, men cannot be hopeful to find the truth by excluding emotive and volitive aspects, and just by logical manners.

It is for the first time since out of eight effective factors in developmental process of belief, William James devoted only one to reasoning and left the other seven ones to non-epistemic factors such as fright, hope, love, hate, childhood upbringings, etc. We try here to explain the non-epistemic factors discussed in William James's article 'the Will to Believe' even though the article and related sources do not give any explanations[3].

## 1. Nature & Nurture

Some psychologists founded genetic and environment as the origin and bases of human's behavior and belief. Environment here doesn't mean mere geographical location, but social relationships, culture and their impacts on the others' behaviors and believes. Genetic and environment along with social and cultural situations both influence on human behaviors. Genetic is related to all the features present at the time of coalescing semen and environment is related to external factors. This factors influence on human beings as soon as zygotes are formed and humans will grow under the influence of both nature and nurture. As human beings are social creatures, society would shape their behaviors specifically. On the one hand, humans' reciprocal influence on each other and on the other hand social culture together affect their behaviors and believes.

## 2. Family (childhood upbringings)

Another effective factor on one's belief is Family. Their social class, economic situation, kind of believes, ideology and training all has an influence on human believes and behaviors. The family will familiarize one with culture, religion, and morality in a sense that in spite of child's opposition; yet the child's way of thinking are affected by the teachings of the family. As one's believes are departed from the family for instance, one is cruel or kind unlike disagreeable with the family believes, their new believes are affected by their family believes. In other words, the family culture has an important role on the children's personality.

## 3. Fear and hope

Fear occurs when one is afraid of an inner or outer matter, true or false. Sometimes humans come to a belief or reject a belief for fear; the reversing state holds also true in which sometime one accepts a belief for he has a wish in mind that requires believing something specific to make his wish come true.

## 4. Love and hate

Sometimes one may behave like the person whom he or she is interested in and denies whatever that person denies. And sometimes one may ignore an idea because of the person he hates even if true. Hate

may also occur when one is facing a situation addressing to be humiliated by believing or rejecting an idea. This is why one either accepts or rejects a belief since he is in hatred.

### 5. Social benefit

One of the basic needs of humans is to be part of a group or community. This group or community ranges from the same-age peers to different religious groups. Each group has its own rules and to be part of a group we need to accept and obey those rules. Indeed, group would influence its members by the given rules; and it is these rules and benefits that again affect their beliefs and behaviors. They will accept those ideas which bring them group benefit and reject those not.

### 6. Personal benefit

Humankind has two kinds of requirements: Physical and mental. Mental requirements are divided into three types of needs: need for kindness, need for self-expression, need for security and goal. Now to satisfy either of these needs, you can accept or reject a belief. You may come to a belief for following a goal in life and this is the positive side of an issue (Shari atmadārī, 1997).

### 7. Emotions and excitement

James believed that mankind has deep tendencies and wishes in his or her mind which are compatible with the truth; and wisdom is not the only way to get the truth; rather one can find clues of truth into his emotive-volitive nature. Even when we make scientific attempts as James put, we try to satisfy our theoretical needs; and what and how of considering the aspects of truth are affected by our tendencies, wishes, fears, needs, hope, etc.

In his view, humans act according to their personal tendencies in their metaphysical options. Thus, even though our logical criteria usually prevent us to be influenced by our moral manners in our stream of thought, James reversely believed this proposition is not true in its generality. We cannot have further hope to find the truth by killing our emotive-volitive nature.

We cannot say intervening emotions in the cognition process makes the cognitive process invalid, because firstly believes can be inspired by a variety of emotions and desires. Secondly it is incorrect to say if belief be

affected by desires; it is a belief with no base of reality. Desire and other states of emotion as much as it can be interfering in the process of cognition can also help it as well. For example when a spokesman likes the topic of his speech or an audience likes the spokesman is more likely to learn than one who doesn't. Fear as well as negative feelings can raise the person's accuracy or preserving a belief can be helpful in acquiring true believes. Thus, we cannot wholly separate emotions and passions from believes or we should not find this ability in the logic to separate them. (James, 2002, p. 225).

So according to James, we can classify non-epistemic factors into two groups:

1. Inner factors which are psychological such as fear, imagination, and pressures.
2. Outer or social factors such as environment, history, and politics.

In Islamic tradition and the history of philosophy, these discussions are of significant importance; the obstacles of knowledge are lust, hedonism, pride, ignorance, dissention, imitation, bias and wishes. Of the actions that block knowledge are sins, aggression, lie, imprudence. These are all part of internal obstacles that is related to the person himself. However, Quran versed about external obstacles, i.e. Social obstacles and named a few such as vicious leaders, misguided friends, propaganda, and context. As the ways of acquiring knowledge, Quran also found piety, patience, gratitude, background knowledge helpful in a way that each knowledge provides the basis for the other knowledge.

In Islamic tradition, the positive and negative influence of non-epistemic elements – either personal or social – is pronounced (Bina, 1988). Also in Islamic philosophy Suhrawardī, Ghadhālī, Mullā Sadrā, and many others paid particular attention on non-epistemic factors. For instance, Suhrawardī not only emphasized on polishing-self to get to the divine knowledge, but also accomplishment to achieve divine intuition (Muva id, 2004).

## Review and Conclusion

One could say that human beliefs are measured not only in the epistemic dimension but also other dimensions can be either helping or hindering knowledge. Gradually with the emergence of new philosophical ideas and advances in the field of knowledge psychology and knowledge sociology, and non-epistemic factors influencing knowledge, it was found that one can also search these factors beyond

beliefs and opinions. As mentioned, William James considered three dimensions in human: conscious, volitional and emotional. He believed that for possessing a belief, humans do not take command only from their ideological sphere, but two other dimensions also play a key role in the genesis of our beliefs. It can be said that in his opinion, human beliefs are not measured only in the epistemic dimension but other dimensions could be helping or hindering knowledge depending on the benefit of moral virtues. He considers this impact positive or negative. The most important aspect of James' psychology was the inclusion of non-rational factors in his analysis. In his view, unconscious emotions and processes are as important as conscious ones. His opinion on psychology is that when there are not sufficient rational reasons on religious belief, the emotional and volitional dimension is entered and we select one of the parties.

According to William James, religion and religious belief are a phenomenon belonging to the human psyche dimension, it is inner and individual, and the religion is concerned with the human emotions dimension not ideological one. He considers our interests, passions and aspirations originated from the emotional and volitional dimension which is effective in shaping our beliefs. James, however, does not consider these effects only negative, but also positive. In his view, the mere involvement of passions in the cognition process cannot be regarded as a reason for human getting away from facts. Rather, it is based on the fact that whether our cognitive structure (which is associated with emotional structure) moves towards knowledge acquisition. Among those eight factors that James considers effective in belief development process, he attributes one factor to the reasoning and ideological dimension and considers the seven other factors as non-epistemic factors: fear and hope, love and hate, personal and group interests and intrigues of childhood. But there are criticisms on the principles and theories of James, some of which are listed below:

## 1. Criticisms of James pragmatism (philosophical basis)

Undoubtedly, James's view on religion is originated from his philosophical ideas on pragmatism. In pragmatism, he believed that a thought is correct until believing it is useful for our lives. Thus any idea is correct when its effects are good; otherwise it is unacceptable. He suggests that the trueness of anything depends on its utility in practice and says: "The truth is nothing but that imaginations (which are only part

of our experience) are true when they assist us in establishing a satisfactory relationship with other parts of our experience." In his opinion, a belief has a satisfactory function when confirmed by experience. That is, it includes satisfactory effects like pleasure and mental peace. This view should be criticized because the effect of a belief on the believer is irrelevant to the trueness of his/her belief. If a belief makes the individual relaxed, it is not a reason for its trueness. Similarly, if it has adverse effects, it does not prove that it is wrong. But it is important that whether the fact is in the same way expressed by a belief. This condition is a reason for trueness or wrongness of a belief and it is irrelevant to the psychological effects of accepting a belief. Russell criticizes this belief in his book. He says that if this view is correct, we must know what is good and what its effects are before determining the validity of any theory, because only after determining the goodness of a belief, we have the right to consider it correct and this will complicate things. Here, Russell cites an example that if we want to realize whether Christopher Columbus has passed the Pacific Ocean, we cannot realize it like other people by referring to history books, rather we should ask what the effects of this belief are, while this is a historical fact not a moral one, so we cannot assess its effects.(Russel B,1994,p135)

## 2. Criticism of James's voluntarism (epistemological basis)

As noted above, William James in his book "*The Will to Believe*" argues that we are often actually forced to make decisions where there are insufficient rational reasons for decisions, because even doing nothing is a decision itself. In his view, religious topics are not exempt from this rule and we have the right to possess a belief while we have not come to a conclusion with mere rational argument. He says that moral duty is made up of two orders: "believe the truth" and "avoid the error." Skeptics only accept the latter by mistake. If believing the truth and avoiding the error have identical importance, so it is better for me to believe one of the parties in any matter because in this case, I have equal probability to believe the truth; if I keep my rule suspended, I will have zero probably.

In this context, the criticism on James's view is that by accepting this theory, we must comment on anything even though we know nothing about it. Bertrand Russell says in this regard: suppose that we encounter an unknown person and ask ourselves about his name and we think that his name may be Ja far Ali. If we believe the James theory, we should

believe that his name is Ja far Ali while few people are named after this. However, according to the James theory, we should consider his name is Ja far Ali unless its contrary is proved. In this context, James considers only absolute belief or absolute lack of belief as possible alternatives and ignores any doubt. In this context, Russell interestingly says: "Believe any hypothesis just as much as its confirming reason allows." (Russel B, 1994, p. 115) James said "the truth is made through the experience." There is a kind of relativism, meaning that James not only conditions the truth to time but also he interprets it as a variable property with different degrees while this variation is related to the truth conjecture not the truth itself.(Azarbayejani M,2006,p39) James considers religious experience as something specific to the individual where he/she is confronted with God. His critics suggest that he has a very individualistic stance on religious experience and ignores both historical and cultural factors.

### 3- Criticism of religious belief of James (psychological basis)

The most important aspect of the James psychology is the inclusion of non-rational factors in his analysis. In his view, unconscious emotions and processes are as important as conscious ones. He openly introduced himself as a religious man and considered faith as a crucial element in life. His opinion on psychology is that when there are not sufficient rational reasons on religious belief, our emotional and volitional dimension enters the scene and we will choose one of the parties. James considers emotions as the deepest religion source and therefore says: religion is an emotional, rather than rational issue because religious context is a tangible quality; an immediate matter for the subject and not the result of inference. People are not often affected by rational arguments about religion, and religious beliefs are rooted in emotion and experience. James claims that an overview of various religious teachings shows that religious beliefs are very diverse, while emotions that are the origin of this rational diversity are constant. As a result, for understanding the commonality of various teachings, emotion and experience must be examined not beliefs.

In his famous book, *The Idea of the Holy*, Otto criticizes James and refuses the priority of emotional aspects over epistemic aspect of the religion and says: due to his empiricist and pragmatic view, James is deprived of understanding knowledge power and human soul's thinking capability and resorts to an abstract and mysterious hypothesis for illustrating this fact (Azarbāyijānī M, 2006, p. 59). What William James

neglects is a kind of direct knowledge and science of presence developed by direct exposure with supernatural facts in human; and extraordinary moods and emotions in this situation are incidental results of the exposure with the holy. Enormous experiences of saints and mystics also imply a kind of intuition and inner wisdom. Parallel to it, however, certain emotional states are developed like fear, intimidation, and brilliance. In his book, *Religious Experience*, Proudfoot criticizes the claims of James: "His claim on religion is that religion is a faith state characterized by epistemic aspects and it is closer to emotional issues than rational ones. She does not totalize emotion and intuition. But he suggests that emotions (which are the perception of changes in physical situation) hold a special dignity. However, he considers religious beliefs as second-hand products that never come into existence if religious emotions did not exist. Religious beliefs are the superficial layer of faith whose best feature is its emotionality, and deep religious resources are hidden in emotions rather than reasoning. Among James's arguments on this subject, one can point to diversity in religious beliefs and the unity of emotions in different religions. Religious emotions such as fear, intimidation, hope and even brilliance which mystics speak of, are common in different cultures and traditions whose languages and teachings are very different. But James's conclusion may be the product of the degree of generalization at which emotions, behaviors and thoughts are described. Fear may be general but monotheistic belief may not be so. But an emotion can be defined with an attributable attribute, and a belief can be defined with specific concepts of a tradition. In contrary, a belief can be defined with general terms and an emotion can be defined with a certain particular belonging. The comparison result clearly depends on how you describe your thoughts and emotions."( Azarbāyijānī M, 2006, p. 40)

The result of Proudfoot's criticism is that the generality of emotions is not their inherent attribute so it cannot imply their priority over beliefs, but it depends on their description. If emotions are described with general words, such a supposition is made. Even if we accept James's claim that emotions are the infrastructure of religion, the question arises that in his view, which emotion is central in religious experience. Emotion-orientation in religious experience is what he calls a state of belief that is not accurate psychologically. What is important in the James theory is the separation of this emotion from thought or belief. This separation finally goes to nowhere and what James calls emotion is in fact a thought carrying a belief. Further, with reference to religious texts

such as the Quran, we realize that the rational cognition component is important in the faith, parallel to emotional aspects. Faith is the opposite of skepticism and the faith comes with cognitive concepts. Extensive research of psychology scientists also contains the claim that the evolution of religious concepts is a function of the cognitive model. In other words, the individual is not passive in accepting religious content and it is not merely emotional states. Thus, religious concepts are created not only based on their philosophical and religious validity, but also these attributes. In his book, *The Diversity of Religion in Our Day*, Taylor rejects James's view on religion. At the same time, he acknowledges that despite being wrong, it has been successful in practice so that it has been more and more common. (Taylor C. 2008)

## Endnotes

1. Avicenna in his '*the book of healing*' put: if a reason is not *for* & *against* of a proposition, let it be a probability.
2. Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski (born 1946) is a philosopher, and is Kingfisher College Chair of Philosophy of Religion and Ethics at the University of Oklahoma.
3. For further information refer to Piaget. J., & Bärbel I. (1988). *The Psychology of the Child*. Translated by: Tufiq, Z. Ney Pub. Tehran.

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