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## Comparison of the Views of Muṭahharī on Fitrah and Schleiermacher on Religious Experience

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of the present paper is to perform a descriptive-analytic study of the relationship between views of Muṭahharī on "fitrah" and Schleiermacher on "religious experience". The meaning of "fitrah" is the insight and inclination towards God, which is established within human nature, and "religious experience" according to Schleiermacher, means feeling of absolute and all-inclusive dependence on a distinct source from Human. In this article, after defining and providing explanations about "fitrah" and "religious experience," the similarities and differences between these two concepts are discussed. One of the similarities is that both innate theology and the feeling of absolute dependence are understood by presential knowledge and heart, not by mind, and both have an internal and intrinsic origin. One difference between the two concepts is that Schleiermacher's theory was put forward after being disappointed with the effectiveness of rational explanations in proving the existence of God, and with the aim of saving and justifying religion and belief in God, whereas the theory of "fitrah" does not share this aim. It is concluded that the two theories are substantially similar and share the same purpose. It appears that many "religious experiences" occur during the manifestation of innate or *fitrah*-based knowledge.

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## Introduction

Schleiermacher states that "I wish to lead you to innermost depth from where religion first addresses the mind. I wish to show you from what capacity of humanity religion proceeds, and how it belongs to what is for you the highest and dearest" (Schleiermacher, 1996, p. 10-11; Reynolds, 2002, p. 54). I do not think that this statement can be applied to a concept other than nature (*Fitrah*) in the framework of Islamic teachings and terms; At least, it can be said that he meant very close to the concept of *Fitrah* in the of Islamic viewpoint.

The present paper compares the concepts of *fitrah* according to Āyatullāh Muṭahharī (1919-1979) and religious experience in the view of Frederick Daniel Ernest Schleiermacher (1768-1834). Considering that in the Islamic and Christian traditions, *fitrah* and religious experience are proposed as intrinsic and intuitive paths to God, comparison of these concepts may further clarify these paths and aid in bringing proponents of the two religions closer together. Muṭahharī is a particularly prominent thinker and theorist in the Islamic sciences, and his works and ideas are counted among the most reputable sources for intellectual and Islamic research. Though the concept of *fitrah* did not originate from Muṭahharī's thinking, his novel development of the concept is both clear and exhaustive. Muṭahharī believes that prior to him, no one had discussed *fitrah* in such a cogent and comprehensive manner (Muṭahharī, 1984).

Schleiermacher is considered as the founder of modern Protestant theology (i.e., liberal theology). Karl Barth maintained that Schleiermacher was not only the founding father of a school of thought, but also the architect of a new era. He founded liberal theology, as well as modern theology (Lane, 2001). The concept of religious experience was proposed by Schleiermacher. This does not mean that there were no religious experiences prior to him; rather he investigated the concept in an intellectual manner, which resulted in it being defined, developed, and established as a core religious principle. The conceptual proximity of religious experience and *fitrah* can be seen in the following quote, "I wish to lead you to the innermost depths from where religion first addresses the mind. I wish to show you from what capacity of humanity religion proceeds" (Schleiermacher, 1958: 46). Shahid Muṭahharī is also of the opinion that man is created with an inherent and internal vision and tendency towards God and religious teachings, and he considered this to be the root and origin of belief in God and religion (Mutahhari, )

Muṭahharī's *fitrah* and Schleiermacher's religious experience seem to fulfill the necessary conditions for comparison, and such a comparison has not been carried out in available sources.

Of course, in an article, nature is compared with religious experience in general (not religious experience from Schleiermacher's viewpoint) and due to their differences, the general discrepancy between these two concepts is concluded (Basiri, 2011). Furthermore, in another study, *fitrah* (the divine nature of man) has been considered the same as religious experience or its origin (Shirvani, 2002). likewise, according to the view of some researchers, nature can be the basis of religious experience (Fanaei Eshkewari, 2018).

The present article seeks to answer the following questions: What are the similarities and differences between *fitrah* and religious experience according to Muṭahharī and Schleiermacher? What can be deduced from these similarities and differences, and how do these two concepts relate to each other? How can Shahīd Motahari's opinion on religious experience and Schleiermacher's opinion on *fitrah* be inferred?

## Definitions

In the opinion of Muṭahharī, *fitrah* suggests that humans cannot have a neutral stance toward the teachings of prophets. Within human nature, there exists a type of awareness (or insight) and demand (or inclination) to which the appointment of prophets responds (Muṭahharī 2003). It is clear that the content of the teachings of the prophets is the religion and its first and most basic component is the existence of God. Schleiermacher (2016) defines religious experience as a sense of absolute and all-inclusive dependence on a source or power outside of us. These definitions of *fitrah* and religious experience are hardly exhaustive. However, for the purposes of the present paper, we use *fitrah* and religious experience as defined by Muṭahharī and Schleiermacher, respectively.

When Muṭahharī uses the term *fitrah*, he means that humans are familiar with God within their very nature. Humans are aware of an entity that is greater and more powerful than them; one who can

address their needs. Furthermore, humans feel a natural inclination toward this entity. The teachings of prophets concerning the existence of God are invitations to this inner finding. In other words, *fitrah* signifies that with their unique spiritual composition, humans are innately aware of and have tendency toward God. Seeking, wanting, and worshiping God are instinctive in human beings in much the same way that infants have been created to instinctively seek out their mothers (Muṭahharī, n.d.; Muṭahharī, 1990).

Schleiermacher states, in explanation of religious experience, that humans feel dependent upon a source or power apart from themselves. This dependence is absolute and all-inclusive (Schleiermacher, 2016). Humans are dependent upon many things relatively and partially, affecting them and being affected by them; whereas they feel dependent upon a particular existence and power in an absolute and all-encompassing sense. This dependence encompasses the whole of human existence and is directed toward a transcendent being (Schleiermacher, 2016), and faith in God is nothing but a definite understanding of this feeling (Schleiermacher, 2016). This feeling is called religious experience which defines the only basis and the essence of religion.

Schleiermacher (2016) believes that the feeling of "absolute dependence" on a distinct entity is potentially present in all human beings; because the talent of "God-consciousness" and the ability to "feel absolute dependence" has an intrinsic origin. When this dependence is felt and experienced, religious experience is realized and communication with God occurs. With the aim of achieving greater precision in use of terminology and avoidance of ambiguous terminology, some terms are discussed below.

*Fitrah*: Considering the literal meaning of *fitrah* (i.e., specific manner of creation, or nature), the terminological meaning herein is that humans have been created with innate possession of God-consciousness and God-inclination. Of course, it must be noted that *fitrah* is not limited to the two only. Ethical principles, for example, are also included within *fitrah*; however, such principles are beyond the scope of the present article.

*Theory of Fitrah*: This refers to a scientific system of ideas that concerns itself with and theorizing about *fitrah*. The views of Muṭahharī on *fitrah*, for example, constitute a theory of *fitrah*.

*Matters of Fitrah*: These consist of matters that are established within human nature and are part of the human creation, including God-awareness and God-inclination.

*Fitrah-based knowledge*: This refers to awareness, knowledge, or understanding that is preexisting within human nature.

*Manifestation of Fitrah*: Matters of *fitrah* are sometimes disregarded or overlooked, such that a human being may not be aware of their own natural awareness and inclination. Manifestation of *fitrah* occurs when the subject becomes aware of *fitrah* and its matters. In other words, it is when one remembers, finds and feels that awareness and inclination within themselves.

*Religious Experience*: A feeling of absolute and all-inclusive dependence on a source or power apart from humans.

*Theory of Religious Experience*: A scientific system of ideas that concerns itself with religious experience.

*Interpretation of Religious Experience*: Religious experience is a unique spiritual feeling. The description of this feeling, along with what has been experienced and its features, constitutes the interpretation of religious experience.

### **The Cultural and Cognitive Backgrounds of the Two Thinkers**

In order to better understand Schleiermacher's theory of religious experience, it is necessary to consider his intellectual background and the conditions of his time. Prior to Schleiermacher, Christianity had gone through the Renaissance and the Religious Reform Movement. In the 17th century, the expansion of the horizons of rationality, the Protestant emphasis on the right of individuals to interpret the Bible, and the dissolution of the spiritual unity of the Christian world created an upsurge in the contradiction of thoughts and ideas. Solely theological activities had been severely compromised. Clashes between Catholics and Protestants left many questioning whether the truth, in its entirety, could be held by one side. The works of Galileo emerged in the 17th century, inciting a strong opposition in the ecclesiastical society. Deists offered numerous critiques on the supernatural elements in Christianity.

A rational movement, Enlightenment, emerged in the early 18th century. Enlightenment strongly emphasized the ability of reason in discovering truth in all areas including religion. Furthermore, Enlightenment promised development toward a desirable system and society through the formulation of educational and social goals. The Enlightenment movement also affected the Church, leading to a reevaluation of Christianity's interpretation of the world, humanity, and Christian teachings (Sykes, 1997).

Prior to the Enlightenment, traditional theology was based on the belief in the Bible, as the revealed book, and the authority of "Revealed propositions." Intellect either played no role, due to its sinful nature (before Aquinas), or played a subsidiary role to revelation (after Aquinas). When the Bible was criticized, the validity of revelation was called into question. In the Enlightenment period, therefore, the role of revelation was diminished and reason became prominent.

Schleiermacher had a background in mysticism as well. He grew up in an atmosphere of pietism, a Christian sect that called for piety and asceticism, as opposed to the worldly lifestyle prevalent at the time. His father was influenced by this school of thought as well. The sect sought to reinforce asceticism and a feeling of inner proximity to Christ. As a result of this background, Schleiermacher also acted as a priest in service to Christianity (Sykes, 1997; Zarvani, 2006; Küng, 1994).

During this time, Schleiermacher discovered the works of Kant, and the Enlightenment movement, in the University of Halle. He became especially interested in rationalism, growing skeptical about traditional and dogmatic beliefs. Kant had the greatest influence on his thought, and he forever remained a proponent of Kant's epistemology. On the path to introducing reforms in theology, Schleiermacher proposed a method of historical criticism for investigating holy texts. Schleiermacher lived in a period when rationalism was at its peak. This extreme rationalism eventually led to an aversion toward reason, promoting a period of conservatism or romanticism. Extreme rationalists disregarded human feelings and emotions, considering reason to be paramount. Schleiermacher's association with the Romantics of his time, such as Schlegel, caused him to question the extreme rationalism of the Enlightenment period (Kong, 1994 cited in Qanbari, 2007, ) and pay more attention to religious feelings.

The arguments that rationally proved the existence of God were challenged by Kant and Hume. Kant considered practical reason as the means to prove the existence of God and reduced religion only to morality. Schleiermacher sought to reconcile religion and philosophy, but was unable to find rational answers to the criticisms; however, he did not accept the reduction of religion to morality.

Therefore, to prove God, he was looking for evidence of Human existence. According to him, Human can have a direct, personal and inner relationship with God. This connection, called religious experience, forms the basis of religion (Schleiermacher, 1958,; 2016). This approach is far from rational criticism, because this kind of relationship is emotional and cannot be rationally criticized.

Schleiermacher considered the doctrines that could be rationally criticized outside the realm of religion (Schleiermacher, 1958). Thus, in order to save religion and theology, he identified religious experience as the core of religion in lieu of revelation, reason, and ethics. The focus on inner experience, rather than on emphasizing teachings and arguments, is one of the effects of Romantic thought clashing against the thought prevalent during the Enlightenment period. The Romantic philosopher, Spinoza, was greatly admired by Schleiermacher. In fact, Schleiermacher's description of the feeling of absolute dependence was inspired by him. Like Spinoza, Schleiermacher considered God as beyond the reach of all human affairs (Copleston, 1988).

After Schleiermacher, William James, Rudolf Otto, and Charlie Dunbar Broad continued his heritage. Today, religious experience plays an important role in the works of theologians, such as William Alston, John Hick, Alvin Plantinga, Richard Swinburne, and Gary Gutting.

The theoretical system of Muṭahharī is based on Aristotelian logic and Peripatetic philosophy. It has also been influenced by Mullā Ṣadrā's Transcendent Philosophy, which makes use of rational input, *irfān* (i.e., Islamic mysticism), as well as direct knowledge. Muṭahharī was a student of Īmām Khomeinī and Allāmah Ṭabāṭabāī, and in his exegeses of the Qur'ān—considering that *fitrah* is a Qur'ānic term—Muṭahharī utilized traditions from the Prophet of Islam, the Imams, as well as rational thought to achieve the most precise interpretations.

One of the motives of Muṭahharī in proposing this discussion is to present an anthropology appropriate to Islamic thought. The necessity of this work was due to the prevalence of non-Islamic

worldviews, such as Marxism and existentialism, with the approach of secular or anti-religious anthropologies in his time, all of which were anthropological theories, contrary to *fitrah* (Muṭahharī, 1989,1995).

### Methodology

Schleiermacher's method in his discussion on religious experience can be considered to have been based on intuitive-rational, and inner experience, which he analyzed. In his first book, *On Religion*, Schleiermacher considers true religion as a feeling [tending to] the infinite (Schleiermacher, 1958). He has interpreted God as "infinite." This direct feeling and intuition, that is, religious experience in his view, is exclusively the main element, essence and basis of religion.

According to this view, religious rites and ceremonies make up the shell of this experience, while dogmas, beliefs, and traditions are out of religion, as they are the result of reflection and thinking on this intuitive feeling and experience. Ideas, abstract principles, and theology belong to the realm of cognition and consciousness, which is quite different from religion (Schleiermacher, 1958). Theology is a translation of this special feeling. Schleiermacher believes that the Bible is a reflection of this experience and a report of the experience of Christ and Christians. All human beings feel this absolute dependence within themselves, as this feeling is an essential element of human nature, and the talent of knowing God stems from their inside (Schleiermacher, 2016). Since religion, specifically, the religious experience itself, is intuitive and is analyzed through a rational method, his method is intuitive-rational. Analyzing with a rational method means defining that inner experience, paying attention to it, and being aware of it. Moreover, its conditions, obstacles and dimensions should be examined.

Muṭahharī's method, concerning *fitrah*, was based on a combination of reason, tradition, and intuition. *Fitrah* is intuitive and internal, and Motahari emphasized on its internal understanding (Muṭahharī, 1382). Since "*Fitrah*" is a Quranic term, Shahid Motahari has used the Quran and hadiths to clarify its dimensions (Muṭahharī, 1382). The intellectual method was also used by Shahid Motahari to investigate and analyze "*Fitriyyat*" such as the existence of God, and innate tendencies, such as seeking God, as well (Muṭahharī, 1382)

### Principles and Assumptions

#### Schleiermacher's principles and assumptions

1. It is not possible to rectify arguments proving the existence of God after the criticisms posited by Kant and Hume. The existence of God does not have rational and logical support; hence, rationalism is not an appropriate approach to religion. This is because theology is different from religion, and reason and intellectual argument are useful for theology. 2. It is not right to reduce religion to ethics, as religion and ethics are independent.

3. It is possible to perceive God and prove religion through the inner feelings of humans. This feeling is a type of experience. Thus, the proof of God's existence lies within humans themselves. According to Schleiermacher's view, that religion is a feeling, and theology is not religion; Some people who oppose religion are, in fact, opposed to the ideas of theologians. Religion is solely feeling and experience, while theology is the investigation of religion. Faith is not tantamount to acceptance of a set of teachings. The essence of asceticism and piety is not knowledge and action, but awareness of absolute dependence--in other words, the connection with God. Christian teachings are expressions of religious feelings in theological terms (Lane, 2001).

#### Muṭahharī's principles and assumptions

1. God is the Creator of humans.
2. God has created humans with special characteristics.
3. God has made human being in such a way that God-consciousness and God-inclination are part of their existential characteristics.
4. God can inform humans of their nature and matters of *fitrah*.
5. Matters of *fitrah* are receptive to feeling and inner experience.
6. Upon birth, humans possess intuitive knowledge.

### Arguments for *Fitrah*

Several arguments can be presented for the existence of the *fitrah* or nature of God-consciousness and God-inclination within humans.

#### Rational reason for the innate knowledge of God

When someone encounters a phenomenon, due to the principle of causality that naturally governs his soul, he looks for the cause of the phenomenon. According to the principle of causation, every phenomenon is dependent on a cause. If that cause has also appeared, then man searches for its cause to reach the cause of the all causes, that is, God himself. Therefore, knowing God is the result of an "innate matter" (Mutahhari, 2003). Moreover, the abstract of the rational reason for man's innate tendency towards God is that there exist a desire for God and a desire to worship, similar to other human values. If a human lacks a soul and nature and is 100% material, then these human values must have a material root and factor; however, there is no material factor for worshipping and seeking God. Therefore, human values, including worship, can only be explained by human nature, and human beings have a "God-seeking nature" (Mutahhari, 2003).

#### Intuitive Argument

Like other matters of *fitrah*, God-consciousness and God-inclination are intuitive. Through deliberation, humans can intuit their existential connection with the Necessary Existence (i.e., God) and, thus, manifest intuitive knowledge of God. Humans can easily gain direct knowledge or awareness of their own existence. By delving deeper into this knowledge, humans can become aware of their intuitive knowledge of God since the existence of humans is dependent upon the existence of God. According to an Islamic tradition, one who knows oneself, indeed, knows one's God (Al-'Amidī, 1986).

By knowing ourselves, we understand the existence of the God on whom we depend. Therefore, the intuitive knowledge of God can be seen in human. Furthermore, the human gravitation toward absolute perfection is intuitive. Throughout their lives, humans experience an awareness and tendency within themselves toward absolute perfection. Since God is absolute perfection, and this tendency has no agent other than nature and is not acquired, it stands to reason that the gravitation toward God is part of human nature or *fitrah* (Mutahhari, n.d., 1990; Khomeini, 1993; Shahabadi, 1981).

#### Argument based on Islamic Tradition

For the Muslims who consider Islamic texts valid, *fitrah* can be proven through Qur'ānic verses and traditions (Mutahhari, 2003).

#### Arguments for Religious Experience

By proposing the concept of inner feeling and experience, Schleiermacher sought to avoid the troubles of justification and rational criticism on religious belief in God. Therefore, one must not strive to rationalize religious experience. Religious experience is a feeling and a discovery. Its validity is self-substantive and has no reference as its basis. This experience exceeds normal perceptions, and is free of error. This approach is congruent with Romantic thought. In this way, humans can establish a direct and personal connection with God within themselves (Schleiermacher, 2016). This connection resolves all doubts and creates a type of knowledge immune to error or hesitation. This view holds that Jesus Christ was an individual who underwent the ultimate form of religious experience possible to humans. Therefore, if the Bible is criticized, or dogmas, rites, and traditions are invalidated, religion will not be harmed, since such matters are merely the shell and manifestations of religion, while the essence of religion is something else. In this way, religion was distinguished from philosophy and science, becoming an independent subject in its own right (Hordern, 1989).

Knowledge of God is possible in two ways: 1- To conclude that God exists through reasoning and intellectual reflection. In this way, the theologians prove the existence of God through arguments, such as the cosmological argument and the teleological argument. 2- To understand God's existence through inner intuition. Basically, reasoning can be expressed and transmitted to others, and it is possible to criticize and reject it. This is evident in the problems posed by Kant and others regarding these arguments. However, understanding and inner intuition of God is a psychological and personal state and feeling, and this type of knowledge cannot be transferred or taught to others by explaining one's

state and feeling. you can only say that you have such a feeling and understanding. Knowing God through religious experience is the second type of knowledge. Schleiermacher considered the first type of theology to be wrong and emphasized on the second type. A personal feeling cannot be proven, that is, it is not possible for the experiencer to convince others that such an experience happened, and it is natural if others do not believe the claimant, because feeling and experience is an internal and personal matter, and it is not possible for anyone to understand whether this feeling exists inside this person or not. It's like the feeling of falling in love when the lover cannot prove the existence of this feeling to others.

Schleiermacher is of the opinion that the individual who has a religious experience reaches certainty and understanding without doubt through that experience. A person who experiences an inner feeling has found a reality without any intermediary. In Islamic epistemology, this finding is called "present knowledge," when a person directly reaches the reality itself, not its imagination. The result of "in-person knowledge" is 100% certainty. Experiencing the feeling of dependence on an infinity is finding that infinity intuitively. The experiencer has control over his feeling; that is, he possesses knowledge without doubt.

### Similarities

1. Both *fitrah* and religious experience lead to knowledge. If the meaning of religious experience is the feeling of absolute and all-inclusive dependence on a source or power, then within this feeling, there is a certain recognition of that source. Of course, we note that Schleiermacher considers ideas and principles to be outside of religion and to belong to knowledge, but he means ideas outside of religion, that have been obtained through rational reflection. He has used religious experience as a basis for the idea of the existence of God. Therefore, the theory of religious experience leads to knowledge. In the explanation of rational reflection, it should be stated that those who have religious experience have experienced a certain feeling. This feeling has characteristics, dimensions and results. When a person encounters a phenomenon, he analyzes and thinks about it. This special feeling is also noticed by humans as a phenomenon and results are reached by analyzing it. Those results are the result of rational reflections on religious experience. Schleiermacher considered religious beliefs, morals and teachings to be the result of those reflections. For example, one who has a religious experience, by reflecting on that experience, comes to the idea that God is infinite, kind and omniscient. Additionally, according to the theory of *fitrah*, there is an internal knowledge of God in all human beings. Therefore, in these two theories, the knowledge of God is possible.

2. The source of this knowledge in both theories is the heart, not the mind, as both God-consciousness through *fitrah* and the feeling of dependence are intuitively perceived (Meşbāh Yazdī, 1989). In a similar vein, Otto separates the numinous experience from subjective states though still considering it a state of reason. He distinguishes this type of knowing from the knowledge gained through understanding (Otto, 1958). Schleiermacher emphasizes that religious experience is a direct and immediate feeling of absolute dependence (Schleiermacher, 2016).

3. Both theories in addition to the possibility of recognition, posit the existence of a particular sort of power or source. According to Schleiermacher's view, infinity (Schleiermacher, 1958) and transcendence (Schleiermacher, 2016) are the attributes of God.

Since the innate relationship exists only between human and God, and not with any other being other than Him, the oneness of God is proven. Therefore, one of the scholars believes that through *fitrah*, in addition to the God's existence, his unity and lordship are also proved. However, in religious experience, it only proves the existence of the transcendent and is unable to prove the uniqueness of God (Basiri, 2011). The same analysis of religious experience is also true according to Schleiermacher's view. He argues that absolute dependence, unlike other dependencies -which are relative and partial- is dependent only on the "one" being, but not on another. Accordingly, Schleiermacher believes that religious experience leads people to join Christianity (Schleiermacher, 2016).

4. Both thinkers believe in and are committed to the teachings of prophets (historical religion). Schleiermacher was a Christian and believed in the Bible and Jesus, and he has proved or justified the God of Christianity by religious experience (Schleiermacher, 2016). Muṭahharī also was a Muslim that

believed in inner insight and inclination of the human to a God that has been described in Islamic sources (Muṭahharī, 2003). Therefore, these two theories concern God of Abrahamic religions.

5. Based on each of these two theories, arguments can be made to (prove or justify) the existence of God. As Schleiermacher has argued, "proving the existence of God" requires no argument. However, others have used religious experience to prove the existence of God, which Christian thinkers such as C. D. Broad (1887-1971) and Gary Michael Gutting (1942–2019) have validated their argument (Hick, 2003). In a similar vein, an argument for the existence of God based on *fitrah* was developed, which was endorsed by some Muslim scholars, such as Shāhābādī and Javādī ĀmolĀī (Shāhābādī, 1981; Javādī Āmolī, n.d.).

6. One of the common results of the theory of *fitrah* and religious experience is that religion also has, at least, one inner or intuitive aspect which may be much more profound and influential than its intellectual aspect. This intuitive aspect is also addressed in mysticism, where religious teachings enjoy a special feel or aura. This inner aspect is very tangible and familiar to some people. Of course, this does not mean that religious experience is tantamount to mystical discovery and intuition, and that those who advocate religious experience follow the same path as mystics. But under the influence of the pietism, Schleiermacher had spiritual and esoteric tendencies. The theory of *fitrah*, is also related to the intuitive knowledge of God (Meṣbāḥ Yazdī, 1989).

7. According to the theory of *fitrah*, awareness and inclination to God are part of human nature and, thus, universally possessed by all humans, though perhaps as potentials not present to mind (Mesbah Yazdi, 1989). According to the theory of religious experience, the feeling of absolute dependence is an essential element of human nature, and the talent to know God stems from the inside and nature of human (Schleiermacher, 2016). Therefore, each of the two thinkers believes in an internal and natural origin for their theory.

8. Both theories assert that this inner feeling toward God is independent of any type of teaching. In other words, religious experience and *fitrah* are not results of a special type of education or religious doctrine. Independence of teaching is the property of all matters of *fitrah* (Mesbah Yazdi, 1989). Moreover, the feeling of absolute dependence on a source is a special inner feeling and is not emergent from the mind and wisdom to which teaching relates.

9. Neither of the theories has reduced religion to ethics.

10. Both *fitrah* and faculty of religious experience have been created by God, and people do not have an active role in them. However, one may lay the groundwork for becoming aware of *fitrah* and obtaining religious experience (Fanaeī Eshkevarī, 2018). One may also strengthen weak *fitrah*-based awareness.

11. Some factors for the emergence of religious experience and *fitrah* include worship and religiously approved austerity, deep contemplation of signs of God, severing ties with everything other than God (whether by choice or not), and self-reflection (Meṣbāḥ Yazdī, 1989). According to Hodge, "Whatever rouses the moral nature, whether it be danger, or suffering, or the approach of death, banishes unbelief in a moment." (Edwards, 1972, p. 132).

Pay attention to the hadith in which Imam Ja'far Ṣadeq (as) guides the questioner to his inner finding and recalls the moment of his drowning in the sea, reminding him of his innate knowledge.

According to the account, the supplicant asked the Imām, "O Son of the Prophet of God! Guide me on who God is, as tempters have left me bewildered." The Imām replied, "O servant of God! Have you ever traveled aboard by a ship?" He replied positively. The Imam continued, "Was your ship ever wrecked where there were no other ships to save you and while you were unable to swim?" The supplicant replied positively again. The Imam pressed on, "In that state, did your heart tell you that there is a being that can save you from the calamity?" He said, "Yes." Imām Ṣadiq declared, "He is the God who can save when there is no savior and no one to hear one's cries" (, n.d., p. 278; Ibn Babawayh Qumī, 2008, p. 231).

In this account, the religious experience of the supplicant is evident. On close proximity with death, the supplicant felt an absolute dependence on a source or power beyond himself. By reminding him of the event, the Imam reveals God. In Islamic terms, Imam Sadiq brings the man's *fitrah* into the light, making him aware that he already had direct knowledge of God, which one becomes conscious of in special circumstances. In terms of the philosophy of religion, by reminding the man of a religious experience, the Imam guided him to the referent of his experience. In this account, the *fitrah* of the



supplicant became manifest through a religious experience (a sense of absolute and all-inclusive dependence on a special origin or power).

Furthermore, it seems that if an inner awareness and inclination toward God did not exist within the person in question, in that situation, his heart would not turn to a being that could save him. Therefore, it might be said that, at least, in some cases, *fitrah* is a prelude to religious experience.

12. Emergence and manifestation of *fitrah* and religious experience have different degrees and, thus, differ in strength among people. This means that the level and manner of *fitrah*-based awareness and inclination are not equal in all people, and it can be strengthened or weakened (Muṭahharī, 2003). Furthermore, everyone understands their religious feelings and experiences differently from others (Schleiermacher, 1958). Of course, this does not mean that religious experience does not have the One Truth in Schleiermacher. The content of religious experience is a sense of absolute dependence on a power that is stronger in some and weaker in others.

13. In both *fitrah*-based knowledge and religious experience, there are two levels: experience and interpretation. That which is *fitrah*-based, and intuitive and inner—and naturally free of error—is the knowledge and experience itself. However, the interpretation, which is carried out using reason and is influenced by the beliefs, assumptions, and culture of the subject of experience and *fitrah*, is susceptible to error and deviation. According to some scholars, *fitrah* does not need to be interpreted, while religious experience needs to be interpreted; as Hindus understand Brahman through their religious experience and Christians describe the result of religious experience in the form of the Trinity. Therefore, religious experience must be interpreted in order to reveal its true meanings (Basiri, 2011). Contrary to this view, *fitrah* also needs a correct interpretation, because according to the theory of *fitrah*, all human beings have tendency towards God, and everyone who has tended to a god other than the real God, has made a mistake in applying and interpreting it (divine nature) (Meşbāḥ Yazdī, 2008); that is why prophets have been sent to resolve this problem.

14. Both *fitrah* and religious experience are the sources of inclination towards religion. As the Holy Qur'an calls humans to turn to the religion of *fitrah*. "Therefore, set your face to the religion purely, the upright creation upon which He originated people" (Al-Rum: 30).

Schleiermacher also believes that religion originates from religious experience and its talent and comes to mind (Schleiermacher, 1996), and this religious experience causes a tendency towards religion (Schleiermacher, 2016).

## Differences

1. Evidently, under the influence of Kant, Schleiermacher lost hope in the effectiveness of rational explanations for the existence of God. Thus, he proposed religious experience with the aim of saving and justifying religion and the existence of God. *Fitrah* is different, however. Of course, the feeling of God's existence through religious experience, as well as its logical nature, has no contradictions or oppositions to the intellectual proof of God's existence. However, Schleiermacher's way of separating religious teachings from problems is that theology, which includes the rational proof of God's existence, is not "religion." The feeling and experience of God is religion.

2. According to Schleiermacher, religious experience is the core and basis of religion. Muṭahharī, on the other hand, does not consider *fitrah* to be the basis for religion, rather the source of inclination toward religion.

3. Due to Schleiermacher's disposition toward romanticism, he considers religious experience as a particular type of spiritual 'feeling.' On the contrary, the basis of *fitrah* is not a special feeling; rather, it is that *fitrah* manifests in the form of a feeling (as was discussed in the section on definitions).

4. The theory of religious experience focuses on the 'experience' of a feeling. However, the theory of *fitrah* discusses the presence of an awareness and inclination. Experience relates to an event or occurrence, such as when a person experiences a special feeling or mood during a religious ceremony after which the experience ends (Fanaei Eshkevari, 2018). Conversely, *fitrah* is an awareness or inclination that always accompanies a person, whether or not they are consciously mindful of it. Furthermore, experience exists when its object of association is perceived, while *fitrah* is not contingent upon perception.

5. According to Schleiermacher, there is no rational explanation for the theory of religious experience, while *fitrah* in humans can be rationally proven.

6. Different views and theories have been proposed about religious experience, of which Schleiermacher's view is one, but the diversity of views about *fitrah* is not as much as religious experience.

### Discussion of Differences

Concerning the first difference, it can be argued that religious experience, as a special feeling, has not been invented by Schleiermacher, rather considered by him. His intention was to find a justification for belief in God following his conclusion that rational arguments for the existence of God had failed. Obviously, an incorrect intention does not necessarily lead to an incorrect result. The veracity of religious experience, whether in a general or restricted sense, is not contingent upon a weakness in or failure of rational arguments for the existence of God.

Regarding the second difference, the fact that religious experience is the essence of religion for Schleiermacher, or that *fitrah* is not considered such for Muṭahharī, has no apparent bearing on the basis of the comparison. This stems from the differences in the understanding of the two thinkers about religion. Unlike Muṭahharī, Schleiermacher considered beliefs, teachings, and even sacred texts to be out of religion. Accordingly, the two thinkers have different ideas about religion and its components.

Regarding the sixth difference, it should be noted that *fitrah* is a Qur'anic and religious concept that has been considered by Muslim thinkers. Therefore, *fitrah* is defined according to the Islamic teachings and its relationship with religion is determined. All Muslims agree on authenticity of the Qur'an, and no Muslim doubts it. Therefore, the general framework of this concept is clear. Consequently, opinions and theories about *fitrah* are not very different. However, religious experience is one of the topics in the philosophy of religion which every thinker, from his own point of view, defines it, determines its characteristics and scope, and identifies its relationship to religion.

On the other hand, the extreme ambiguity of a religious experience, which is due to being intuitive and the differences between cultures and emotions, cannot be dispelled by a valid scripture. These factors give rise to very different theories about religious experience and, sometimes, even make it difficult to define religious experience (Patterson, 1998). Some studies, after examining and comparing religious experience and *fitrah*, have severely invalidated religious experience and emphasized the differences between *fitrah* and religious experience. Such studies on religious experience intended its general concept, while the study of religious experience, from Schleiermacher's point of view, will be completely different from such discussion and change the result.

For example, one of the differences between *fitrah* and religious experience raised in such research is the reality and indisputability of *fitrah* due to its "knowledge by presence." *Fitrah* also has a single truth, while religious experience may be unreal, and even if it is true, every experience has a different truth (Basiri, 2011). This difference is due to the breadth and diversity of religious experience. But for Schleiermacher, since the sense of absolute dependence is understood as knowledge by presence, it is both real and unquestionable and has a single truth, although it can have different interpretations similar to *fitrah*.

#### Fitrah and Religious Experience from the Point of View of Others

Although the study of religious experience from the view of other philosophers is beyond the scope of this article, it is appropriate to consider the views of some philosophers of religion in this regard. In his research on religious experience, Otto (2001) considers religious experience as confrontation with the sacred. He states that "the tendency towards the sacred and the desire to encounter the sacred is rooted in human nature, which is structural and inherent" (Otto, 2001, p. 218). By using the term "predisposition," Otto has accepted the concept, if not the term, of *fitrah*, and considers inclination to religious experience to be inherent (*fitrah*-based), as well. In Otto's view of the relationship between nature and religious experience, it may be said that *fitrah* is the prelude to and the cause of the desire for religious experience.

Stace (1998) believes that just as there is a rational aspect to human nature, there is also a mystical aspect, albeit this aspect is weak in many people. Stace bases the idea of the mystical aspect of human nature on the reaction of human beings to mystical issues. He believes that a sign of this aspect of

human nature is that, like poetry, the words of saints and mystics excite something within us, no matter how weak. Furthermore, something inside us responds to the words of the mystic, just as something within us responds to the words of a poet. Stace means that mystical speech establishes a connection with something within us, indicating the existence of a mystical aspect in human nature. According to Stace, mystical issues include religious experience, meaning a sense of absolute dependence. Using this argument, he has drawn a connection between *fitrah* and religious experience. He well understood the mystical and God-conscious *fitrah* of human beings.

### Conclusion

According to what has been said, it is concluded that the similarities between the two theories prove a certain homogeneity and closeness between the two. In fact, all the components of religious *fitrah* are somehow in the religious experience, as well. According to Schleiermacher, religious experience is a feeling of absolute dependence on a transcendent being, and this feeling is "God Awareness," which is an essential element of human nature. Then, nature and essence of man requires that man become aware of God. Is *fitrah* anything other than this?

By considering the third and fourth differences, it cannot be said that these two theories are exactly the same, as *fitrah* is the tendency towards God and "God-consciousness" within man. However, religious experience is a feeling of absolute dependence. The relationship between *fitrah* and religious experience is revealed by this explanation:

According to the theory of *fitrah*, what is in the nature and creation of man is to know God and the inclination towards Him, even though man is not aware of this knowledge. According to the theory of religious experience, the faculty of "God-awareness" and the feeling of absolute dependence are placed in human nature, although one may not have experienced and felt that absolute dependence yet and may not be aware of it. When that dependence is felt, religious experience has taken place, and *fitrah* has emerged and manifested.

Therefore, if we want to make a one-to-one correspondence, we can say that religious experience is like the emergence and manifestation of the God-seeker and divine nature. Then, the faculty of God-consciousness and the context of absolute dependence is like *fitrah* and can be applied to it.

Religious experiences occur in the process of emergence and manifestation of *fitrah*, and understanding of innate cognition.

Considering what was discussed herein, it seems that Muṭahharī would have a positive view concerning the Schleiermacher's theory of religious experience, since it is completely in line with the theory of *fitrah*. The same seems true for Schleiermacher regarding the theory of *fitrah*, since it validates the theory of religious experience. Thus, the two theories support and can explain each other. According to *fitrah*, human beings possess innate awareness of and inclination toward a certain being, and according to religious experience, human beings have a feeling of absolute dependence on a supernatural being.

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