
The Three Dimensions of Belief Differentiating Religions

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Abstract: What human being has been entangled seriously in could be the problems of religions. Some people are compliant or protestant to the religion itself, and also conflict with the other's religion different from theirs. It is commented that the religions problems are induced by a variety of faith or belief internalized to person by person. So, this study attempted to analyze what differentiates religions as Christian (Catholic, Protestant), Buddhist, and Atheist, institutionalizing three dimensions as the continuation from God or from Human, the approach of God by faith or ration, and the purpose as material reward or spiritual satisfaction. The analysis showed the three dimensions are independent to estimate distances between pair of religions. Suggesting that belief works to influence on human life, this study confirms what makes various religions discriminated, and contributes to what should be regarded for resolution of religious conflict.

Keywords: Dimensions of Belief, Christian, Buddhist, Atheist

1. Introduction

The controversial statement is about that humankind is born with the properties of religion. Some could agree to that human is subordinated to God, pivoted by Christian philosophers. For endorsement of that, St. Augustine of Hippo (353-430) confessed that rational thought which human is relied on, is the servant of faith for God in reference of [1] for more discussion. However, others remained with disagreement. One of dissidents, Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1885) argued that human is born free from the great designer, but makes choice of faith to god in [2]. The controversies evolved with the problems of what god is referred to, and how god is accepted, and why god is believed.

For the problems of what is referred to god, Christian developed in Western, posited that god is the supreme in qualities different from human. Conferring St. Anselm (1033-1109) who proclaimed on ontology that God is the perfection in reference of [3] for more discussion, God is the only one and the position could not be substituted by human being. With agreement, St Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) stated on cosmology that the chain of causes should be succeeded by

the ultimate cause in reference of [4] for more discussion, as in say the One.

In contrast, Asian philosophers as Confucians and Taoists construes god as Nature or natural laws, represented as 天 (Heaven, the higher places) which has different properties from Christian, assuring that human could access the level. The doctrine was explicated in their words, as “順天者昌”, translated as “the person who follows the heaven is to prosperity” in Confucian in reference of [5] for more discussion, and for Taoism as “無為自然”, meaning that “do not stubborn to the artificiality, but harmonize with the nature” in reference of [6] for more discussion. In compliance, Western philosophers have discussed also as revealed in Benedict de Spinoza (1632-1677), who rationalized his term “god” as the natural reason in reference of [7] for more discussion, commented as similar with Confucian. Similar as Taoist, Marcus Aurelius (121-180) regarded nature to be accorded with in living in reference of [8] for more discussion. Further, the inclination to relate human and god is remarked in Buddhists, saying that “色即是空”, translated as “people in society could arrive at the state of god as Buddha” in reference of [9] for more discussion. This thought is moved to the Existentialists doctrine, as instanced by Jean-

Paul Sartre (1905-1980) as that people are to live with “Nothingness” in [10], translated to “空”. Similar as Buddhism earlier in Western, Sextus Empiricus (160-210) preferred pending judgment to confront in living as in say ‘no more this than that’ in reference of [11] for more discussion.

Since what are gods have been discussed, the problems how to know them should follow. It is controversial whether the god is accepted to individual in ratiom or by faith. In era of Christian thought, Boethius (480-524) stated that God and goodness is synonymous, and ones who achieves the goodness is identified with gods in reference of [12] for more discussion, implying that the knowledge of god could be got by rationality, accounting goodness and evilness which are done by the free will. In inauguration of rationalism, René Descartes (1596-1650) proposed that god could be posited in knowledge by rationality, relied on his skepticism as in say “I think, therefore I am” in reference of [13] for more discussion. In contrast, Augustine quoted as in say “Unless thou believe, thou shalt not understand”, suggesting that god is known by faith in [14]. Rejecting ratiom, Kierkegaard suggested that rational work to proof god only undermines faith, proclaiming that what is lack to human is not ratiom but passion with which to live or die is confronted in [15]. Therefore, whether god could be approached by ratiom or faith is one of problems to be analyzed.

Following how accept god by ratiom and by faith has been discussed, now, why god is believed should be problematic. Religious faith is converted to personal belief, since it is what internalizes his or her religion. In personal aspect, faith is synonymous as belief, which has to pursuit what is required for living, defined as perspective (cognition) to a social object at [16], and coincided with emotion in reference of [17] for experimental analysis. So, it can be asked what are purposes of that individual has a kind of belief to God. That is construed as in say to “God’s benediction”, which has two qualities different each other in thinking whether it is material reward or spiritual satisfaction. That people of religions envision either material or spiritual purposes would be realized is questioned.

By this introduction, the problems were discussed as what continuation is posited; between the god centered or the human centered, what method approaches to god; by faith or ratiom, and what purpose is envisioned; of the material reward or spiritual satisfaction. It should be remarked that two contrasts in each of three domains, though they are leveled as two, are not discrete, but continued along each dimension. Therefore, this study hypothesizes that the varieties of religion could be identified at positions in the three dimensions; the god-the human centered, the faith-ratiom approach, and the material-spiritual reward.

As discussed, faith to religion is personalized to be diverse, so called the divisions of religion. The diversion of religion, for a positive profit, could fit for individual persons to adjust to their society, and to resolve personal problems as conceptualized as “agony” by Sartre in [10], and 苦 (translated as “agony”) by Buddhists. That is commented as one of purposes in religion, as William James (1842-1910)

proclaimed that religion has a pragmatic value in daily life at [18]. For negative problems, the religion disposes to strengthen so tightly the bond of its own society that it is conservative to reject other’s doctrines, and to evoke troubles, conflicts, and at last struggles (or wars). Therefore, this study, witnessing the variation of religion, profitable and troubled, attempted to identify them in the three-dimension as proposed in the above for more understanding. Following to find the differences or distance among various religions, it could suggest a solution of the human problems provoked by religious divisions, and a guide for human welfare hoped by the religion’s original purposes.

2. Method

This study was relied on a constructed survey, questioning about the three dimension of religion as proposed. This study compared religions as Protestants, Catholic, Buddhists, and Atheists.

2.1. Participants

242 people were sampled in streets at Jinju, South Korea in 7-10, Dec. 2012. Of them, 120 were identified as males, and 122 as females. For distribution of religion, Protestants were amounted to 66, Catholics to 43, Buddhists to 34, Atheists to 99.

2.2. Survey Materials

This study collected data with a constructed survey which questioned about the three dimensions of faith for religion (abbreviated as 3DF): (1) How do you level in a dimension about that Gods are absolute, or accessible by human (abbreviated as “God-Human centered”), (2) about that the acceptance of god is done by faith or by ratiom (abbreviated as “Faith-Ratiom approach”), and (3) about that the reward of faith is material or spiritual (abbreviated as “Material-Spiritual reward”). So each dimension has two extremes, each of which has three questions. For “God centered” (1-1), the three is as 1-1-1 “God existence by himself”, 1-1-2 “Human relieved by God”, and 1-1-3 “Salvation in post-living”. For “Human centered” (1-2), the three is as 1-2-1 “God needed for human”, 1-2-2 “Social order by god”, and 1-2-3 “Human happiness by god”. For “Acceptance by faith” (2-1), the three is as 2-1-1 “God felt by faith”, 2-1-2 “God aware with pleasure”, and 2-1-3 “God in sympathy”. For “Acceptance by ratiom” (2-2), the three is as 2-2-1 “God known by ratiom”, 2-2-2 “God understood by rational meaning”, and 2-2-3 “God defined in ethical ratiom”. For “Material reward (3-1)”, the three is as 3-1-1 “Absolute benediction”, 3-1-2 “Richness endowed”, and 3-1-3 “The good business”. For “Spiritual reward” (3-2), the three is as 3-2-1 “Nothing except god trusted”, 3-2-2, “Free from anxiety”, and 3-2-3 “All comfortable”. So, three questions of two extremes in three dimensions were composed to 18 items, which were rated on Likert scale of 7 degree, and additional questions of personal identity as religion, gender, age, living region, education, occupation, and economic status, which

were responded in nominal, were included in this survey.

2.3. Analysis

This study analyzed the differences of religions as Christian (Protestant, Catholic), Buddhist, and Atheist, which were defined as between subject variable. The responses of this survey were analyzed in statistics to confirm the three dimensions by Factor Analysis, to point each religion’s distribution by Mean analysis, and to find each distance between pairs of religions by Euclidian distance. The statistics was processed by SPSS (v.21.0).

3 Results and Discussions

The result was processed first by Factor analysis to find dimensions of belief, second by Euclidian distance to measure how far each paired means of religions, and last by Scheffe’s test of means to decide significance.

3.1. Three Dimensions Described by Factor Analysis

Each item of this questionnaire was matched to three dimensions extracted by Factor analysis (KMO & Bartlet test and Varimax rotation), as shown at Table 1. When the extracted factors are matched with the items in the questionnaire, it is nearly that the three factors are correspondent to the three dimensions which this study supposes, as organized as Table 1, though some of items are duplicated across the factors. In factor analysis, 3DF as God-Human centered (1), Faith-Ration approach (2), and Material-Spiritual reward (3) were fixed.

Table 1. The three dimensions extracted by factor Analysis.

Items	Components		
	1	2	3
God existence by himself	0.720	0.432	0.334
Human relieved by god	0.631	0.615	0.225
Salvation in post-living	0.607	0.463	0.420
God needed for human	0.644	0.464	0.295
Social order by god	0.663	0.421	0.285
Human happiness by god	0.824	0.166	0.045
God felt by faith	0.284	0.762	0.327
God aware with pleasure	0.352	0.775	0.316
God in sympathy	0.504	0.724	0.246
God Known by ration	0.145	0.775	0.202
God understood by rational meaning	0.421	0.663	0.285
God defined in ethical ration	0.431	0.729	0.279
Absolute benediction	0.358	0.197	0.772
Richness endowed	0.316	0.352	0.775
The good business	0.279	0.431	0.729
Nothing except God trusted	0.404	0.178	0.778
Free from anxiety	0.282	0.243	0.822
All comfortable	0.452	0.253	0.703

3.2. Each Religion Posed on the Three Dimensions

On the three dimensions which were extracted in the above 1, the positions of each religion were fixed with the point value, which is indexed by the mean of each religion on each dimension, as shown in Table 2. With the positions, the distance of each pair which is combined with all religions, was calculated with Euclidian process, as shown in Table 3. Interpreting the distances, Atheist is near to Buddhist but far to Protestant. Buddhist is nearer to Catholic than Protestant. Specially, Catholics are nearer to Buddhist than to Protestant

Table 2. The position of religions on 3 dimensions.

Class	Existed for God itself	for human	Known by faith	by ration	Purposed for material	For Spiritual
Atheist	-0.69	-0.55	-0.63	-0.55	-0.60	-0.66
Buddhist	-0.37	-0.33	-0.29	-0.22	-0.34	-0.35
Protestant	1.07	0.88	0.93	0.77	0.98	1.02
Catholic	0.24	0.16	0.25	0.25	0.15	0.23

Table 3. The distances of pairs combined rounding various religions.

Pair of Classes	Distance
Atheist-Buddhist	0.216
Atheist-Protestant	0.844
Atheist-Catholic	0.543
Buddhist-Protestant	0.676
Buddhist-Catholic	0.336
Protestant-Catholic	0.418

3.3. The Differences of Various Religions on the Three Dimensions

With potions of each religion on each dimension, Scheffe’s tests of the merged religions for each dimension were processed as shown in Table 4. Why the religions are merged in this analysis is that no more analysis for each religion is needed since the above 1 and 2 already did. The two dimensions as God existed for himself or for human, and as God known by faith or by ration were significantly differentiated among various religions. However what dimension is not differentiated was only on the purpose for material or spiritual.

Table 4. The difference test on each dimension for the religions.

		N	M	SD	F	P	Scheffe
Existed for himself-for human	Atheist ^a	99	-0.282	1.106	6.324	.000	a<c
	Buddhist ^b	34	-0.085	0.898			

		<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Scheffe</i>
Knowby faith-by ration	Protestant ^c	66	0.360	0.976	4.079	.008	a>c
	Catholic ^d	43	0.163	0.593			
	Atheist ^a	99	0.174	0.860			
	Buddhist ^b	34	0.154	0.802			
	Protestant ^c	66	-0.347	1.361			
Purposed for material-for spiritual	Catholic ^d	43	0.010	0.601	.822	.483	
	Atheist ^a	99	-0.106	0.976			
	Buddhist ^b	34	-0.017	1.068			
	Protestant ^c	66	0.065	1.017			
	Catholic ^d	43	0.158	0.979			

4. Conclusions and Suggestions

This study was successful to institutionalize 3 DF as God-Human centered, Faith-Ration approach, and Material-Spiritual reward. Religions as Christian (Protestant, Catholic), Buddhist, and Atheist were distributed on the 3 DF which was tested as independent by Statistics. The points of each religion on the 3 DF, and distances between religions paired, show how far the religions are different one another, and what properties are similar or not each other. The information could be practical to compromise the diverse religions.

Prominent in the results, Protestant is comparatively centered to the absolute god, relied on faith to know god. So it is much aliened from the other religions. Catholic is rather nearer to Buddhist than its sister Christian, Protestant. Among religions, Buddhist is the nearest to Atheist, which is tempered to the human centered and the rational approaches. This figure may be used for discrimination of religions, but also for harmonization of them. What the trend is evolved on may be embodied in the orthodox of each religion, or the historical situation of times and regions. However, the discussions are out of this study, suggesting the same design of study needs to be applied to other regions, where the proportions of various religions are distributed differently from this study.

What this study questioned about belief is meaningful in discussion of various religions. Religions are indulged in purposes for human salvation from evil world, posited by the tradition, or for people's adaptation to the real societies, proposed by humanism. The work of religion is accomplished since it is embodied by belief, which affects on personal daily-life. In agreement, Kierkegaard argued that god is not accepted by ration or reflection in objective reasoning, but passion or faith on personalized attitude. He protested to inactivation of some rational tests of the God as the ontological god or the cosmological god.

To introduce, Anselm defined the God as the perfection of omnipotence in [3]. With this ontology, the only One is admitted to the world. As another testament as cosmology, Aquinas generalized that one thing has to be caused by another, also followed by one more other, and in succession of causality, at last the ultimate cause is to be admitted as the only One, the God in [4]. It is really right by definition for the former, and by generalization, for the latter. The truth by definition falls in tautology criticized by Moritz Schlick

(1882-1936), who stated that it is meaningless and not verified in [19]. The conclusion by generalization induced limitation of observation, argued by Carl Popper (1902-1994) who criticized that the last one is out of data and so not falsified in [20]. With those of scientific philosophy even with some controversy, and if one more reviewed about the processes of belief as this introduction chapter, it is convinced that without the internalized belief, only rationalization works no effect on personalized life.

Therefore, this study which engaged in analysis and identification of religious belief attested what religions work for mankind. However, how much the religious belief influence on the real life remains questioned out of this study which is only indulged on description. The processes of influences should be analyzed in some psychological experiments or observations in the real field or society, with control of variables as religious history, belief levels, attitude change for religions, and etc.

The three-dimensional category analyzed in this study is to root on the beliefs required by each of various religions. A kind of belief positioned on the three dimensions is to have people stubborn to their own religion. In individual aspect, what belief works guides person subjected to manage personal life. Therefore, it is commented that one who has a belief, should be a theist in reference of [21] for more discussion, even though he or she has a different kind of belief from the traditional religions. With this rational, that human is born in religion, could be announced, as Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536) insisted that what religion is based on is a through-going humanism as in say "human reason" in reference of [22] for more discussion.

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