



MUSLIM RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE: RECENT RESEARCHES IN TURKEY

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Religious experience in Turkey has deep historical roots. Within the historical periods of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey became a safe homeland for many well-known Muslim mystics, like Ibn Arabi, Mawlana Jalal-ad-Din Rumi, and Yunus Emre, who still illuminate the hearts of many Muslims and non-Muslims in the contemporary world. Through their deep influence, Turkish people have traditionally been keen on religious experience and mystical/Sufi experience. Nevertheless, the term “religious experience” and many philosophical debates and scientific researches on it have become known in Turkish language through the entrance of the discipline of the Philosophy of Religion into Turkey in the 1980’s. The first properly written and fairly comprehensive book on the discipline was Mehmet Aydın’s book, *Din Felsefesi (The Philosophy of Religion)*, published in 1987. Aydın had done his PhD on Islamic Philosophy in Britain and, for this reason, wrote the book very similarly to the British or Analytic style in the main subjects and methods such as John Hick’s *The Philosophy of Religion*. From that date on, many students, who are eminent scholars now, have been educated to be a philosopher of religion in the country or abroad; and they have produced several good works on the main issues. Naturally, some of them investigated and wrote on religious experience as one of the basic topics of the philosophy of religion. Most of them are theoretical works and just the two are survey studies. In the following article, we will try to describe and evaluate some of them briefly.

Theoretical Works

“The Argument from Religious Experience” by Mehmet Aydın

The first significant work on religious experience in Turkey is the chapter entitled “The Argument from Religious Experience” in Mehmet Aydın’s book mentioned above. He deals with religious experience here as an argument for the existence of God, not as a general concept with its detailed description and several problems. However, it has been an illuminating introduction for further studies on the subject.

First of all, he starts with a terminological explanation that what he means by the term “religious experience” is not religious life in general but is a strong or “intensive

psychological situation” like the Sufis usually live and William James investigated in his well-known book. After clarification of the definition, he moves on to the historical information concerning this type of intensive religious experience. According to al-Ghazali, faith has three degrees: imitation, knowledge, and (Sufi type of) experience, which is the highest degree of all. Mawlana Jalal-al-din er-Rumi also praises and recommends this degree of faith; and calls it as the way of “divine love”. He finalizes the historical information with Bergson’s ideas.

Secondly, he deals with the characteristic features of religious experience. It is (a) direct and instantaneous, (b) totality which cannot be analyzed, (c) contains an encounter and rapprochement, (d) cannot fully be told to someone else, (e) and private to the person who experienced. Thirdly, he moves on to the problem of criteria for the truth and validity of religious experience. For him, there are two criteria: (a) pragmatic/ethical test, and (b) intellectual/philosophical test.

Finally, various critiques of religious experience are discussed. For instance, (a) religious experience ranges diversely from religion to religion, and culture to culture. (b) Religious experience is private and so closed to objective evaluation. (c) The person who claims to have religious experience might live in a fantasy world and interpret it incorrectly although he or she is an honest person who does not tell lies at all. (d) There is no direct relationship between pragmatic/ethical use of an experience and its truth in reality; superstitions having no solid foundation might sometimes be useful, too.

In the end, he makes a general reassessment. In his views, “none of these critiques have the power to prove the idea that religious experience is an imagination.” For him, “in spite of the whole critiques, religious epistemology has to take seriously the assertion that the Sufi experience is the third epistemological source (together with revelation and reason).” This is because “it is not seen a reasonable cause to deny the possibility that some exceptional persons may really have very deep and comprehensive religious experience.” (Aydın, 1987 (1992): 81-92)

As can be seen, Aydın has described the phenomena of religious experience within the Western and Islamic/Sufi context, and discussed the issue with the concepts and references which are familiar with the readers of the philosophy of religion. Nevertheless, he is not in a position strongly for or against it. In accordance with the theistic approach in his book, he seems to evaluate it positively and find it valuable from the point of view of religious spirituality and morality. However, he seems to leave the final decision to his readers and to the researchers who will come later. As a matter of fact, much more detailed and assertive investigations have been made by philosophers of religion in Turkey after him.

Epistemology of Sufi Experience: A Contemporary Approach by Ramazan Ertürk

In 2004, Ramazan Ertürk, who did his PhD in the USA on “William P. Alston’s Theory of the Epistemology of Religious Experience”, published his book entitled *Sufi Tecrübenin Epistemolojisi: Çağdaş Bir Yaklaşım (Epistemology of Sufi Experience: A Contemporary Approach)*. The basic problem he dealt with in the book is item (b) mentioned above in the section of the critiques of religious experience: Religious

experience is completely private and subjective and so it is closed to objective evaluation; and for this reason, it has no epistemic value at all. Ertürk discusses this critique throughout the whole book and tries to reject it as a totally wrong idea.

According to Ertürk, sufi experience is a kind of religious experience. Sufi experience has two stages. The first one is a preparatory stage. Purification and improvement in faith, worship, and morality are actualized in this stage. The second one is a living stage. In this phase, a sufi arrives at the various stations peculiar to the sufis, lives some extraordinary miraculous experiences of hearing, seeing, talking, which are beyond the limits of sensational perceptions (2004: 75-100). He comes to the conclusion based on the examples discussed in detail that the Sufi experience, which might sometimes be observed publicly, is similar to sense experience, and so “it is also an objective experience in its essence” although it contains more subjectivity in comparison to sense experience (114).

Subsequently, based on analogical reasoning in classical logic, he claims in the whole book and especially in the conclusion that if sufi experience is similar to sense experience from the perspective of objectivity, then it must be similar to it in its epistemic or cognitive conclusion, too. In that case, “if beliefs and convictions based on sense experience have an epistemic value, then beliefs and convictions based on sufi experience do also have, and must have, an epistemic value” (121, 142).

Religious Experience and Mysticism: A Philosophical Approach by Abdüllatif Tüzer

In 2006, Abdüllatif Tüzer’s PhD thesis, *Dini Tecrübe ve Mistisizm: Felsefi Bir Yaklaşım (Religious Experience and Mysticism: A Philosophical Approach)* was published. The book is composed of three main chapters. In the first chapter, the true nature of religious and mystical experience is dealt with. In the second chapter, their possibility, and in the third chapter, their value is analysed. Tüzer points out in the beginning of his research that he will stick to the principles of a philosophical research such as objectivity and rationality, or being critical, analytical, coherent and comprehensive (2006: 8).

Tüzer also works in a faculty of theology like Ertürk but their conclusions are quite different from each other. Tüzer’s final verdict is seen in the last paragraph of his conclusion. For him, (a) “it cannot be said by philosophical grounds that religious and mystical experiences are objective and cognitive experiences;” nevertheless, (b) “it cannot also be denied that these experiences add some richness and depth to the sentimental worlds of human beings” (2006: 365). Basic reasons for this conclusion are as follows: Religious experience is not a cognitive experience which gives information on something. Because they are irrational, supernatural, ineffable, paradoxical, and far from any kind of verification or falsification. Besides, there is no reconciliation among the people who claim to have it. It can also be shown that these experiences come from natural causes. Finally, pragmatic usefulness of the experience does not prove that they are objectively true and valid experiences (2006: 364).

Religious Experience and 'Maunet': Extraordinary Religious Experiences of Ordinary People by Cafer S. Yaran

In 2009, my book, *Dini Tecrübe ve Meunet: Sıradan İnsanların Sıradışı Dini Deneyimleri (Religious Experience and 'Maunet': Extraordinary Religious Experiences of Ordinary People)* was published. The introductory chapter of the book contained theoretical views on religious experience (while the main chapters were about the survey research on religious experience, which will be mentioned below). In the Introduction, after the definition and history of religious experience, it mainly deals with the criteria or principles of reliability in religious experience. Here the two principles are investigated and criticized and then a third one is suggested.

The first principle considered is the principle of verification by the positivists. They do not regard any kind of religious experience as true and genuine experience because they cannot be verified by scientific criteria and they try to explain them all in terms of completely natural causes. Whereas, for me, the verification principle is an extreme principle and its requirements cannot be met not only by religious or mystical experience but also by some social, moral or even scientific experiences and ideas. In any case, this principle has been left by the majority of philosophers for a long time. If intuitions which surpass experience and reason may play an important role even in some scientific discoveries, they must be accepted in religious and mystical matters provided that they might meet some reliability tests. So the verification principle or criteria in the subject area of religious experience is too extreme, too hard, and consequently wrong; in brief, it is not worth to be taken seriously.

The second principle considered is Swinburne's principle of credulity. In my opinion, although this principle is reasonable and useful in general, it is, nevertheless, too soft, too credulous, too similar to fideism. It is not suitable enough to differentiate between genuine religious experience and false one. It does not seem sufficient to prevent or make mistakes in the evaluation of experiences whether they are really religious or not. To be credulous and to judge by appearance is not a safe and reliable way in any important matter including religious experience. In this case, there seems to be a necessity for a third and middle way criteria between the first two principles, the one is too hard and the other is too soft (28-40).

The third principle suggested and developed is a "principle of criticality," the term taken from the concepts like critical rationalism or critical realism. In terms of this principle, when an experience is lived by a person or is claimed by someone else, firstly, it should be looked at to see whether it can be explained completely naturally or not. If it cannot, then, secondly, it should be checked whether it can be explained in a supra-natural but non-religious, non-mystical way. If it cannot be explained in these two ways, in other words if these two ways are eliminated, then, thirdly, it seems quite reasonable to look for a religiosity or spirituality in the experience. Is there positive evidence to show that the experience is highly probably a religious one? In this situation, it must be considered carefully that it is not contradictory, it is appropriate, to the basic religious doctrines and fundamental moral principles. It should also be checked whether the experience has contributed to the person who had it positively from religious, spiritual and moral perspectives. If an experience passes these types of tests successfully, then it is reasonable to believe that it is a genuine religious experience.

And after this stage, there is no need to expect and wait that everybody else without exception should also confirm it as religious experience (40-51).

After this book, although some MA and PhD theses have been done on religious and mystical/sufi experience, there has not been published another book yet. One of the PhD thesis completed in 2015 and has not been published yet is Betül Akdemir's thesis: "*Çağdaş Din Felsefesinde Mistik Tecrübenin Epistemolojik Boyutu: Bağlamsalci Yaklaşım Örneği*" (The Epistemological Dimension of Mystical Experience in Contemporary Philosophy of Religion: The Example of Contextualist Approach). In this study, she discusses the problem that the "beliefs attained through mystical experience are the sources of particular knowledge, independent from religion" within the scope of the contextualist approach, which comes to the fore among contemporary theories. There are two claims relying on support of contextualist approach, which takes the philosophical discussions after Kant in consideration: 1. Mystical experience is a kind of experience, which is constructed by means of the context. 2. The beliefs that depend on experience are defective propositions, which represent the context and thus could not be evaluated by means of their true value. After having revealed the frame and justifications of these two claims that the contextualist approach includes, she tries to determine the power, limits and problems of the explanation that has been offered. As a result of the analysis and philosophical evaluations regarding the views of contextualist approach, she comes to the conclusion that the contextualist approach is inefficient and reductionist in determining the nature of the mystical experience, while it has an eliminative manner in terms of the epistemological value of mystical experience. Thus, her basic assertion is as follows: Although the contextualist approach gave a new point of view to the contemporary discussions on mysticism and brought forward some important questions within the context of the current philosophical paradigm, the explanations it includes are not helpful in understanding the phenomenon of mystical experience.

Survey Research

There are only two survey studies on religious and mystical experience in Turkey. Both were published in 2009; and there have unfortunately been no other surveys made after that date.

Mystical Experience Levels of Religious Officers" by Ahmet Albayrak

One of these surveys was made by an academician who works in the field of the psychology of religion. The data in the survey have been collected from 150 Muslim religious officers, including 132 imams and some others, living in the city called Giresun, on the Black Sea coast. According to the conclusion of survey, the total rate of having mystical experience among religious officers is 78,91%. In this survey, mystical experience has been categorized into three groups. Among the religious officers, the most highly experienced type is extrovertive mysticism, 35,23%. The second type of experience mostly lived is religious experience, or in his own terms, "religious interpretation, 22,53%. And the least experienced type is introvertive mysticism, 21,15%. (Albayrak, 2009: 179-82).

Religious Experience and 'Maunet': Extraordinary Religious Experiences of Ordinary People by Cafer Sadik Yaran

In 2006-2007, I did a national survey of Muslim religious experience in Turkey, travelling all of the seven regions from East to the West and interviewing people from various backgrounds based on random sampling, and collected 1,236 valid questionnaires which included 36 questions and a space for writing the most exceptional experience the participants had had.

Personal Details of the Participants: 54,0% of the participants were men, and 46,0% of them were women. 44,2% lived in town, 26,1% lived in a city, and 25,0% lived in villages. 44,7% of the participants have a university degree, 23,5% of them have education of secondary school level, 17,3% graduated from primary school, and 12,2% have postgraduate degrees. To our question, "Have you ever had a psychological or psychiatric problem?", most of them, namely, 72,5% of them replied "no, never". 23,1% replied "yes, but a mild one"; and only 4,4% said "yes, a serious one." To the question, "How good is your religious (Islamic) knowledge?", 54,4% of the participants answered "good", 31,1% "middling", 9,3% "very good", and only 4,4% said "poor." We asked a similar question about their religious identity in accordance with their level of religious practising. 67,3% consider themselves as "religious"; 17,0% as "less religious"; 5,3% as "very religious"; 3,4% said "I am not religious"; and 7,0% "refuse to answer".

General Proportion of Religious Experience

Our first question was:

1. "Have you ever had an extra-ordinary, exceptional or supranormal experience which you would qualify as "religious or spiritual" experience (state or event)?"

The percentage of the answers given to this question is:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| a. Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> 45,9% |
| b. Perhaps but not sure | <input type="checkbox"/> 19,6% |
| c. No | <input type="checkbox"/> 34,5% |

Option 'b' shows a high level of about 20%; so before making our final decision concerning what amount of Turkish people report religious experience, we should find a way to place people saying "perhaps but not sure" into one of the clear sides of "yes" or "no". Our second main question helped us to do this. As we have already said, ordinary people had not heard of the concept of religious experience at all, and had difficulties in understanding it sufficiently in the short question above. But when he or she was given a relatively more detailed description of the various types of religious experience, which one might have had during the process of life to date, then he or she more easily understood the matter and tried to remember whether or not he or she had had one or more of twelve types of religious experience such as: receiving God's help in answer to prayer; awareness of God's guidance in a specific event; having a guiding dream coming true; and the like – as we will see below.

The results of the second question were that 63,7% reported to have had one or more of the twelve types of religious experience described in the second question; and 36,3% chose none of the options. These figures show that 17,8% of the people saying “perhaps but not sure” in the first question reported to have had some experiences, while 1,8% of them, who pointed to none of the twelve options, were added to the people saying “no” in the first question. In this case, the precise percentage of the answers of Muslims living in Turkey concerning whether they have ever had a religious experience or not is as follows:

- | | |
|--------|--------------------------------|
| a. Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> 63,7% |
| b. No | <input type="checkbox"/> 36,3% |

Looking at the difference between men and women, it is obvious that women (“yes”, 49,5%) have more religious experience than men (“yes”, 43,0%).

Basic Varieties of Religious Experience

In our second question we aimed to find out what sorts of religious experiences Turkish people have, and what are the proportions of them. We asked the following question of twelve options:

2. If your answer to Question One was “a” or “b”, what sort of experience(s) have you had? *[tick all that apply to you personally]*
 - a. Receiving God’s help in answer to prayer or in response to a desperate need
 - b. Experiencing that prayers for healing are effective
 - c. Awareness of the presence of God
 - d. Awareness of God’s guidance in a specific event or in your life in general
 - e. Awareness of God’s punishment in connection with a sin, guilt, or curse
 - f. Having a guiding dream coming true
 - g. Having intuition and insights coming true
 - h. Near-death experience, in other words, ‘return from the dead’ experience
 - i. Feeling the presence of someone who has died
 - j. Awareness that a person has been in two different places at the same time
 - k. Experiencing that all things are one
 - l. Other (*Please write a brief description*)

Receiving God’s help in answer to prayer or in response to a desperate need is the most widely reported variety of religious experience in Turkey. 25,2% of participants report this, and this proportion is almost twice that of the nearest option which was (13,1%) awareness of the Presence of God.

Awareness of the presence of God is the second most widespread religious experience with the proportion of 13,1%.

Awareness of God's guidance in a specific event or during the life process in general is the third most widespread experience that Turkish people had. 12,8% of the participants report to have had this experience.

Awareness of God's punishment in connection with a sin, guilt, or curse is the fourth most widespread experience among Turkish people. 12,2 percent of the participants report to have had this type of experience.

Experiencing that prayers for healing are effective is the fifth most widespread experience that Turkish people had. 11,8% of the participants report to have had it. This experience can be considered as a sub-version of the first and most widespread experience, that is, receiving God's help in answer to prayer. But it was worth investigating separately.

Having a guiding dream coming true is the sixth most widespread experience among Turkish people. 8,5% of the participants report to have this type of experience.

Having intuition and insights coming true is the seventh most widespread experience among Turkish people. 7,8% of the participants report having had this type of experience.

Near-death experience, in other words, 'return from the dead' experience was reported by 4,1%.

Feeling the presence of someone who has died has been experienced by only 2,7%.

Awareness that a person has been in two different places at the same time was reported by only 1,1%.

Experiencing that all things are one is reported by very very few people, just by 0,5%.

In consequence, we can divide these twelve varieties of experiences into three categories from the perspective of being frequently experienced. First of all, receiving God's help in answer to prayer is the most widely reported religious experience. This is the most frequently received category of religious experience in Turkey. Secondly, six other types of experience, namely, awareness of the presence of God, awareness of God's guidance, awareness of God's punishment, experiencing that prayers for healing are effective, having a guiding dream coming true, and having intuition and insights coming true, are the varieties of religious experience that are often experienced. And finally, near-death experience, feeling the presence of someone who has died, awareness that a person has been in two different places at the same time, and experiencing that all things are one are the varieties of religious experience that are quite rarely experienced by Muslims in Turkey.

The Relation of Experience with Religiosity Dimensions

One of our questions was intended to find out the relation of religious experience with different dimensions of religiosity. The question was this: "Did the experience strengthen your religious life in any of the following ways?" *[Tick any items that apply to you]*

- a. I have a stronger faith
- b. I worship and pray more
- c. I have a closer and more personal relation to the divine being
- d. I have a more developed moral and spiritual life
- e. I have a more developed social life
- f. I have a happier and healthier life
- g. I have fewer or no fears of death
- h. Other (Please write)

Among these options, the most widely accepted option is the first one, that is, the answer "I have a stronger faith", 43,3%. This is such a large proportion of the sample that there is a big gap with its nearest follower, 14,7%. I think this is strong evidence against the argument by some religious people who reject religious experience for fear that it will weaken people's traditional religious belief and practise by supplying them with an alternative individual way to God. Whereas, the results of our survey do not support that view and show that their worry is an unnecessary one. By contrast, religious experience strengthens religious belief. So it is useful rather than harmful to religion. The second most selected option is having "a closer and more personal relation to the divine being" by 14,7% of the respondents; the third most popular option is "worshipping and praying more" by 14,5; the fourth is "having a more developed moral and spiritual life" by 9,9%.

In fact, the situation that religious experience is useful and so, really desirable for someone's religious belief is clearly seen in some verses of the Qur'an, too. According to the Qur'an, even one of the greatest prophets, the Prophet Abraham, seems to wish to have that kind of experience:

"When Abraham said: 'Show me, my Lord, how You give life to the dead!' He asked, 'Do you not believe?' Abraham answered, 'Yes indeed, I do believe; but I wish to set my heart at rest.' Then Allah said: 'Take four birds, draw them to you and cut their bodies to pieces and place a part of them on each hill, then call them: they will come to you in haste. And know that Allah is Mighty, Wise.'" (The Qur'an 2/260)

This case of the Prophet Abraham and the results of our survey show that religious experience supports and strengthens religious belief or faith; and it can even be said that experientially supported faith is stronger and qualitatively higher than just propositional belief or imitational faith, i.e. the strength and quality of belief of experients is greater than those who proclaim to believe or those raised in the Islamic faith. All these results show that religious experience causes various types of positive

effects upon the people who have them. The strongest positive effect is upon religious faith, and then comes religious worship, ethics, social relationships, happiness and the like.

Requirements of Religious Experience

Another question was related to the requirements of religious experience. The question was: "Is it necessary to have religious belief to have a religious experience?" Almost half of the participants chose the option 'e', "No, it is a free gift from God", with the highest proportion of 48,9%. This shows that Turkish Muslims give the priority to Allah's wish and will, rather than human desires and efforts to have a religious experience. By doing this, they imply that having religious experience is not the monopoly of some religion, some sects, or some Sufi orders. God can give this gift or ability to whomsoever God wishes.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that there are no reasonable requirements or triggers of religious experience related to human beings themselves. When we look at this part, we see that Turkish Muslims give the most importance to a high level of morality. Option 'c', that is, "Yes, you must have a pure heart and high morality", was selected by 26,2%. This is a much higher percentage than the following one, 14,9%, which was the percentage for "following religious commandments properly and regularly". This is another of the interesting results of the survey, because, traditionally Islam has three main dimensions; and they are counted as faith (*iman*), worship (*amal*) and morality (*akhlaq*) in turn. The result of the survey shows that, at least for having religious experience, people see a pure heart and morality as more important than formal worship. This does not of course mean that they do not care about worship, for they see it as important, too, with the proportion of 14,9%; but 26,2% is much higher and shows more importance is put on a pure heart and high standard of morality with (or without) formal worship.

The other options are not considered as important for having religious experience. For example, "being a member of a Sufi order" (3,3%); "the experience is due to a coincidence, illusion, delusion, etc" (4,0%); and "being properly oriented psychologically" (2,7%).

Genuineness of Religious Experience

Another question was designed to find out how sure the experients were that their religious experience was genuine and not an illusion. 62,1% were "absolutely sure"; and 30,5% were "sure, but not so certain". Only 7,4% were doubtful about its genuineness. These respondents seem to be right in their assertion concerning the genuineness of their religious experience. For, as Mohammad Iqbal says,

"the revealed and mystic literature of mankind bears ample testimony to the fact that religious experience has been too enduring and dominant in the history of mankind to be rejected as mere illusion. There seems to be no reason to accept the normal level of human experience as fact and reject its other levels as mystical and emotional. The facts of religious experience are facts among other fact of human experience and, in the capacity of yielding knowledge by interpretation; one fact is as good as another."
(1988: 16)

The Importance and Aim of Religious Experience

Some other question was about how important religious experience was to the experimenter. 52,1% found it “very important”, 30,0% “important, and for 13,8% it was “so-so”. This shows that most people find their religious experience quite important even if they have it infrequently in their life. The sixteenth question was similar and asked about whether “they would like to have more such religious experiences?” 63,6% said “yes”; and the seventeenth question was about the reason they would like to have more experiences. 58,2% chose the option “To be able to be someone who is closer to God”, and 33,5% chose the option “To develop a stronger religious and/or spiritual personality”. The other option, namely, “To be able to have extraordinary powers” was chosen only by 2,3% of the participants. This shows that the great majority of the participants find religious experience significant just for religious and spiritual reasons, not for egoistic or worldly interests.

Conclusion: The proportion of roughly 64% of Turkish Muslims reporting to have religious experience is a relatively good sign to show that religious experience is a living fact and quite widespread in a secular, Muslim country. Various factors might have been influential in this result such as an inborn natural capacity of human beings for religious experience; Islamic theology’s emphasis on praying to God; Islamic Sufism’s encouragement on a personal relationship of love and friendship with God; and Anatolian popular religiosity’s traditional stress upon religious experience.

Among the twelve varieties of religious experience asked about in the questionnaire, “receiving God’s help in answer to prayer” is the most widely reported one. This is completely appropriate to the monotheistic structure of Islam. Then, six other types of experience, namely, “awareness of the presence of God”, “awareness of God’s guidance”, “awareness of God’s punishment”, “experiencing that prayers for healing are effective”, “having a guiding dream coming true”, and “having intuition and insights coming true” are the varieties of religious experience that are often experienced by contemporary Muslims in Turkey. These are also the types of experiences that no Muslim objects to in theory or practice. Then, “near-death experience”, “feeling the presence of someone who has died”, “awareness that a person has been in two different places at the same time”, “experiencing that all things are one” are the varieties of religious experience that are quite rarely experienced by the Turkish Muslims questioned. Some of the experiences in this final category are disputable from the perspective of orthodox Islamic theology. It seems, however, that the majority of Turkish people report to have experiences of the sort respected by both Muslim theology and Sufism.

As a result, we can say that, roughly 65% of contemporary Turkish Muslims have various types of religious experience. The varieties of religious experiences they usually have are in accordance with Islamic theology and philosophy as well as Islamic mysticism or Sufism. A genuine religious experience strengthens religious faith and encourages a high level of morality. And having a pure heart and a high level of morality is also likely to lead to having more religious experiences, together with religious experience being mainly a free gift from God. Briefly stated, religious experience is mutually and closely linked with having sincere faith and high morality. In addition, the various stereotype criticisms against genuine religious experience do not seem to reflect the truth. Therefore, a genuine religious experience is absolutely

worth having, studying, and encouraging others to have for the sake of a deeper epistemological and spiritual human ability, for a purer heart and a higher level of morality, and especially for a closer relationship with and a stronger faith in the Ultimate Reality.

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