

# The Comparative Study of Morals and Democracy and Their Effect on the Behavioral Reflections of Khawaja Nasir Al-din Tusī and John Dewey

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## Abstract

This study was aimed at comparatively analyzing morals and democracy from John Dewey and Khawaja Nasir al-Din Tusī's view point. It also sought the effect of the two philosophers' view point about morals and democracy and behavioral reflections. The purpose of this study was also to become familiar with the effect of morals and democracy on behavioral reflections of John Dewey (as the west representative of the behavioral reflection). It also tries to familiarize the readers with Khawaja Nasir al-Din Tusī's view point as the Iranian and Islamic representative of the behavioral reflections. The similarities and differences existed among the mentioned philosophers were identified. This was a descriptive and analytical research study. The study investigated the philosophers' opinions with regards to human beings, morals and democracy and their effect on the education and training. The results of the study showed that there are differences between John Dewey and Khawaja Nasir al-Din Tusī's view point about human beings, morals and democracy. The differences were effective on their behavioral reflections, too.

**Keywords:** John Dewey, training, human being, morals, democracy

## 1. Introduction

If we are to prepare a useful plan for the purpose of training today's generation, it is a must to make use of the theories, viewpoints and suggestions of the previous philosophers. It is easy to find blessings and modern methods of training among their words. The necessity of comparing the behavioral viewpoints of these philosophers is not hidden to anyone, but investigating the educational viewpoints of all of these philosophers is not an easy task and needs constant effort and time. In this study, the researcher has decided to analyze and has selected John Dewey as the western and Khawaja as the Iranian-Islamic representative. Dewey (1859-1952) is one of the greatest and leaders of the American Pragmatism who developed education and training in that school and especially around the globe. Based on his biography, all of his life was spent on studying, education, training and writing. Dewey has about 1000 books and articles (Gothic, translated by Seresht, 2009, p. 120). His books were a really useful resource book not only for the American learners but also the learners around the globe (Connell, translated by Afshar, 1989, p. 152). It first was under the influence of idealism and later developed the psychological aspects of pragmatism (Joas, 2015). It is possible to refer to Hegel, Darwin, Comte, Rousseau, Pstalvzy, Froebel, James, Mead, and Pierce (Dewey, 1970; Baqeri & Attaran, 1997). Nasir (1200-1274) is one of the greatest men of Islamic behavioral and training. Khawaja has had many compilations during his fruitful life; generally, over one hundred books, articles and annotations (Rahnama, 2009, p. 48). His famous compilation about morals and training is Naseri morals. Khawaja at the time of Moguls was near to be in power. Khawaja's intellectual resources in writing subjects of training is Quran and Traditions as well as Greek and Muslim philosophers and thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, Galen, Samstysvs, Frfutyus, Nyqvjavsh, Brvsn, kennedy, Miskawayh Razi, Ibn al Haytham, Farabi, Ibn Sina, Ghazali, Abdullah Ibn Muqaffa and Abu Zeid Balkhi (Tusi, 1999; Modaresi, 1947; Hamidi, 2011). The significant issue of the study is to compare John Dewey and Khawaja Nasir's points of view about morals and democracy, and also is to realize the effect of this view on these two philosophers' behavioral reflections separately. Considering Khawaja and Dewey's written materials, inferences

about training from their view points are drawn. The researcher aims at comparing similarities and differences between these two philosophers' viewpoints.

## **2. Human Being from John Dewey's View Point**

Before considering the issues of morals and democracy and their effect on training, it is needed to know the two philosophers' opinion about human being, i.e. the subject of morals, democracy and training and see if there is any difference. In Dewey's idea, human being is part of the world and an entity that reaches self-awareness and the world is what human experiences, and as realities are always changing and modifying, human being is also changing (Ferasat, 2012). Dewey sees human as inherently facing problems and that he should solve them. He considered humans' thinking as the way of solving those problems. He believed that human cannot go further than his experience and that going to the other world is useless and foolish. Human being is the result of the society and no identity is supposed for one alone, except that he is part of a group (Ferasat, translation of Shadan, p. 145). As well as being a social entity, based on Dewey's idea "human being is a living entity always in contact with the world. He is not separated from the nature and is always with it. This living creature is always affected by his natural and social environment" (Ebrahim-Zadeh, 2007). Based on what is said above, human being is in Dewey's opinion a living-social entity that should make him ready for experiencing and changing and can find out about the world depending on his experiences. He can solve the problems that always appear. Also, human being is flexible and can go forward in the world based on changes and even can have mutual interactions.

## **3. Human Being from Khawja's View Point**

For Khawja, human being is innately an entity that is in the middle level "human is innately in the middle level and is among other entities' levels and his way is toward respect, to the superior level or to the nature and to the paradise" (Toosi, 2012). He can reach a superior level or an inferior one. Human's training must be based on science and knowledge so that he can both reach happiness and can go from middle level to the upper level. Human soul is a widespread essence; it is due to the soul's dignity that rationalities are understood, and wisdom in this sensitive body that most people call it human being by senses, and that essence is neither a physique nor physically, and it is not felt by any senses, and it is here needed to mention a few things to finish the sayings: first, proving the existence of the soul, and then proving its essence, after that proving its greatness, then expressing that it is not physique and physical, next it is understood by its essence, then is not felt with any senses (ibid, p.49). Human beings' perfection and happiness is of two kinds: "one is scientific and another is related to action. Science without action is useless and action without science is not possible at all, so the base is science and action the whole" (Toosi, 2012). So, both kinds of perfection in Khawaja's idea are necessary as well as supplementary, and achieving them is needed for human's perfection. So, human being in Khawaja's idea is an entity which his eminent aim is spiritual and not physical "that essence is not neither a physique nor physical, and is not felt with any of the senses" (ibid, p.49). But at the same time, it does not refuse the existence of human and puts a value on it, and also consider both soul and physique in training.

## **4. Morals form John Dewey's View Point**

Of the reasons to consider the issues of morals and democracy in this study is that in Dewey's thinking: "there is a close relationship between democracy, morals, education and training, on the other hand, these cannot be separate (Ghasemi & Ayatollahi, 2010). He emphasized that morals seen from the view of social are in contrast with the ones seen of psychology. His observations about the essence of personal behavior morals in his discussion of psychology have been shown and his tendency in morals social origin in his discussion about social issues has been shown (Spencer, 2006). Dewey says: "if we do not limit morals in meaning, we can say all of our relations with others are the subject of the science of morals, usually we call an action as a moral action when widespread relations are contained in that action, and we call its mind reflection a virtue. Probity, honor, chastity, and the like are examples of virtues. These are not valuable by themselves, and their value depends on the role they play in the society (Dewey, 1966). The following cases can be in relationship with Dewey's view point about morals, education and training:

1) In Dewey's view, the time we agree on whenever the issue of better or worse occurs, the subject of morals is faced, we have to confess this fact that morality is a continuous quality and not a fixed perfection (Dewey, translation of Hamedani, 1955). 2) A student learns some points via his school books and he repeats them. He of course earns a cognition but it has very little and unimportant effect on his conduct. Knowledge should be joined with reality actions at schools (Dewey, 1916). 3) Putnam says Dewey believed that solving a problem is always "temporary" and is "possible to make an error" (Putnam, 2005). This characteristic in Dewey's works is seen repeatedly and he obviously believes in morals knowledge in making errors. 4) Natural growth, discipline, refining the characteristic, and providing service to the society are of the subjects of morals. These are the

qualities of one who is a good member of the society (Dewey, 1916). 5) In Dewey's idea, probity, chasteness, grudge, braveness, banality, strenuous, and irresponsibility are all adaptations of personal powers to the environmental ones. They are creating a mutual action among the elements due to the creating the person and the elements made by the outer world (Mouris, 1970). 6) In Dewey's opinion, morals issue about motivation and instinct, either in a child or an adult, is changing an old habit so that these habits can in modern situations do the society a service (ibid, p. 104). 7) Those actions are called "moral actions" which contain widespread relations, and we call mind reflection as "virtue". Probity, dignity, modesty, and so on is some examples. These virtues are not valuable by themselves and their value depends on their role they play in the society (Dewey, 1966). 8) For Dewey, believing in ideal is maybe the biggest mistake in philosophy. This big mistake is based on that whatever is correct in a situation, will be correct in all other situations without any stipulations. Whenever moral principles instead of useful tools change into fixed rules, these rules will limit people more than before and prevent them from gaining experience. 9) Fixed moral wishes are not acceptable, but a move towards completion. A move that no end to that is imaginable (Dewey, translation of Abu Saeedi, 1958). 10) Education and training in a democratic society not only should adapt strange behaviors of people with society's rules, but also change their way of thinking and wishing into moral ideals so that their behavior modifies spontaneously based on moral principles (Dewey, 1916). Therefore, moral is not a fixed and absolute wish, and can always be changing "...in a situation like this, even the highest moral principles should be revised" (Dewey, 1958). Schools should train students' morals based on the society's principles so that students become suitable and useful for offering services to the society. He also admits that the value of moral virtues depends on the role they play in the real social life. In a sentence it can be said that morals in Dewey's point of view is subordinate to the social values, relative and possible to make errors "morals principles are also possible to doubt" (Dewey, 1955).

### **5. Morals from Khawaja's View Point**

Kholgh (spirit) is a quality that considers the soul as ordering one easy action without needing to think and check. In his theoretical philosophy, it has been revealed that sensual qualities are called Hal (the nature of the individual), and the behaviour. The causes of its existence are two things: one is nature and the other habit. But the nature is the person's real inner kind of talent, same as one who is a subtle cause of his stimulation, or like when a person hears a little song or a rather bad news, will face fear and worries (Toosi, 2012). In another sentence Khawaja divides people, considering the worth of good and evil, into these groups: "First, those who do a lot of good deeds and the second group, who are evil and do not do good, the third are those who are neither good nor evil, and the fourth group who are always evil and many evil acts are seen from them" (Toosi, 1981). So, the subject of the science of morals is human's soul, because it can provide good and appropriate acts or bad and incorrect depending on its wish, and if it is so, it first should be realized that what the soul is and what its absolute perfection is, and what its powers are, so that when to use it for one thing the perfection and happiness ideal for that be provided (Toosi, 2012). According to Khawaja's views about morals, human beings are not inherently good or evil. Human's wishes are subject to their future achievements. However, Khawaja believes that some people are innately good or evil. He also sometimes points to the children's tendency to do bad deeds "a child that tends to evil acts, is more eager due to a lack in nature" (ibid, p. 222); but consider the majority as subordinate to their achievements. There are two significant elements which determine the origin of moral actions: rational soul and freedom. Rational soul distinguishes good deed from evil and explains them, and provides the freedom to choose between the two. Action mind or moral science's base is the two elements mentioned. Action mind or moral science is explained with rational soul and realized by freedom. It seems that Khawaja sees some of the children and evil people at first oriented towards evil, but also believes in their being trained and improved.

### **6. Democracy, Education and Training from Dewey's Point of View**

When we consider education and training as a social element and one factor of providing for the society; we have to accept that education and training like other human societies contains a variety of diversities. So, general principles of behavior cannot be used in all societies (Dewey, 1916). Dewey in his life became known as a democracy philosopher. Pragmatism as a philosophy counterpart of democracy is available everywhere, because democracy is the religion of a pragmatist (Maksi, 2007). Understanding Dewey's philosophy without understanding his intention about democracy will be incomplete. On the one hand, in his thinking, there is a close relationship between democracy, morals, education and training and it can be said that these three cannot be separate (Ghasemi & Ayatollahi, 2010). In Dewey's viewpoint democracy is not limited in political environment. Everywhere there is a public, democracy can also be there. Family, school, factory are the places which have the capacity to be democratic. Dewey not only recognizes this possibility, but also knows it as the significant condition in order to realize democracy meaning prospering human talents (Dewey, translation of Abu

Saeedi). Based on Dewey's belief, to free from today's corruption, precious outcomes can be drawn from training young generation, and he knows education and training as the most important tool for social and economic reformation. However, in Dewey's idea, training youth is not the only way of reformation but is the most economical and regular one (Dewey, translation of Hamedani, 1955). When education and training is known as a social element, we have to accept that education and training also contain a variety of diversities. One of these diversities that in Dewey's view is necessary for the society and consequently for teaching and training is democracy. Dewey as a democracy philosopher in Pragmatism school was not only peculiar and limited to the political environment in Pragmatism school during his life. A society that wants to interfere with people in the social affairs needs to consider the leading role of training and education and thought enhancement of the people and equip them with awareness and knowledge. As Dewey believe if it is not such, then "the great gains of majority pains would be captured by the minor jobbers and democracy would be vanished" (Dewey, 1916). And it indicates that democracy existence highly depends on awareness and training and educations of the society. According to Schreier "democracy is conditioned on education and training and education is the model of democracy in its best way" (Schreier, 2015). Dewey believes that a democratic society is bound to education and training. And such a society aims to interfering people in social affairs and it cannot overlook the importance of education and training; therefore, it takes all individuals in to account. He enumerated some advantages for a democratic education and training system in a society in his discussions as following: 1) Eliminating social classes, class consciousness, and social discriminations; 2) Cooperation in governmental affairs; 3) More freedom of individuals; 4) Sharing experiences; 5) Eliminating gaps among races by free experiences exchanging; 6) Considering talents and abilities of children; 7) More organized movements and revolutions or counter revolution (if social or political revelations are not accompanied with appropriate training, there would be other revolutions or counter revolution movements (Kardan, 2009). Dewey believes that a revolution would be successful if internal changes are accompanied with moral and intellectual changes and these conditions will be met only by education and training assistances (Shato, translated by Shokohi, 2010). 8) Social and economic reforming and getting rid of corruption: as Dewey believes" to get rid of corruption we can learn from education young generation and education and training is the most important tool for social and economic reforming" (Dewey, translated by Hamedani, 1956). 9) Time and Cost Economy: according to Dewey" education and training for young people is not the only form of reforming but it is the least expensive and the most organized ways". We should bear in mind that in the discussions of democracy and education and training and other educational discussions sex was not taken into account. As if he did not see any differences between males and females to discriminate them. And at the end, it should be noted that Dewey was so engaged in democracy and education and training so that one of his compiled books was on this subject and as most educational scholar believe this book is the most important book of John Dewey.

### 7. Democracy in Khajeh's Term

According to Khajeh the society demands an individual who is confirmed by God and in every era such a person has existed in each society. So in Khajeh's term choosing that person is not by majority of opinions nor by cooperation or consensus but in some cases it refers to public interest: In different conditions a person is needed dominant by a power of inspiration of God so that people follow the instructions of him. This person is called the owner of honour. And honour is the conditions and situations around him. And Muhaddithes called him shari'e (legislator; the bearer of the religion) and the conditions for him are all about the religious law and Plato stated the same concept in an Arabic sentence in his fifth essay of the republic and Arstatalis stated in an Arabic sentence "هم الذين عناية الله بهم اكثر". That is, those are the ones that God considers most. In conditions of religious edicts, a person is needed who is dominant by the power of inspiration of God and other people's perfection is bound to them and. In the past they were called as "ملك على الاطلاق" that is, the most powerful and unquestionable king and Imam, and the action is the mission of an imam and Plato is called him the director of the whole world and Aristotle called his a civil person that is a person who created civilization (Tusi, 2012) it should be noted that by king it is not meant that he owns lands and properties but he desired to have. Generally in every time and century such a person is not needed but every time or period demands a director to lead and help people in time of difficulty to keep the honours of people and leads people (p. 254). The civil wisdom was about roles that was for the people's interest and if people cooperate and distribute, things could be done so that good get the real perfection. Tadbir-e-manzel was about a wisdom in which the people's interest is taken into account and it is about the living and getting to perfection in way a to find common point. And this is true for every one whether they are king or regular people scientist or illiterate all need these contraptions and everyone needs to follow these rules and the benefit would get to public and the benefits are both in here and in hereafter world. The best woman is the wise, religious, noble, knowledgeable, shy, kind, hot talk too much and obey her husband and give birth and a good housekeeper (Tusi, 2012). It has been mentioned in traditions that woman

must be prohibited to learn about Yusuf chapter in Quran. Hearing and learning of stories of this kind may deviate them and they should be prohibited from wine regulations. And woman do not have any superior characteristic more important than these two and girls should listen to things appropriate for them and they should be up brought so that be good at housekeeping, dignity, nobility, shyness and all other feature appropriate to them they should not learn to write and read too and when they were matured enough get married (pp. 229-230). In Khajeh's term the society needs a person who is attached to God inspirations and called him a lawyer and honored. Such a person is confirmed by God. And he believes that in every era such a resourceful person is needed. That person takes decisive decisions for public interests, "and if any member of the whole defects the public interest it will interfere to cure and treat"(Tusi, 2012). Regular people should follow the experts and as Khajeh believes both the society and the individuals will gain benefaction and blessing, moreover it has worldly and hereafter benefits. Sex differentiation is clearly stated in Khajeh's training. Generally speaking, whatever Khajeh means by education and training is for males. And even he prohibited females from "reading and writing" (p.230). And he invited ladies to chastity, honesty, taciturnity, obeying husband and so on. Even he has inhabited girls to learn some chapters of Quran "women must be forbidden from learning Yusuf chapter since learning it may cause deviation for them" (p.219). Consequently, almost half of the society, the women is deprived of jobs and occupations.

### 8. Summary of Research

Life and intellectual resources:

Table 1. Educational variables in view of Dewey & Tusi

Educational variable	Dewey	Tusi
Life and intellectual resources	Birth place: America (Barrington)	Birth place: Iran (Tus)
	Pragmatism school	Islam school
	20 <sup>th</sup> and 19 <sup>th</sup> century (1859-1952)	The 13 <sup>th</sup> century (1200-1274) having 100 books and annotations about mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, ethics, and training, Quran and hadith and scholars like Plato, Aristotle, Farabi, Avicenna, Meskayayh, and Ghazali
	Having almost 2000 books and papers about psychology, philosophy, ethics, and training the intellectual resources Hegel idealism earlier and later pragmatism like Darwin, Froebel, pyros, Mead, James	

Many things can be inferred from Table 1: differences in birth places (Iran and America), influential scholars for both philosophers, and almost seven centuries of differences in life time (the 20th century for Dewey and 13th century for Khajeh) the community of them, influential schools for both philosophers (Islam and pragmatism school of thought) backgrounds and studied books, wars and their effects on both philosophers' life( first and second world wars in Dewey's era and the Mongol invasion to Iran in Khaje's era), and different positions of them are of factors of differences in their thoughts and contemplations. But with all these differences, there are some common points for these two philosophers. The intellectual resources of ancient Greece were applied by both of them. Other common point for them is teaching and their subject of compiling which were about philosophy, ethics, and training. According to the mentioned points, differences in their life styles, people around them and intellectual resources are more than their common grounds and similarities.

Table 2. Mankind in Dewey and Tusi perspective

Educational variable	Dewey	Tusi
Mankind	A biological and social creature. He should prepare himself for changes. He can recognize the world as far as his experiences	A physical and spiritual creature. The mankind's nature is in between. The perfection for mankind is closeness to God.

As it is indicated in Table 2, based on Dewey's perspective, mankind is a biological and sociable creature and prepares himself for gaining experiences and changing and understands his world according to his experiences. And tries to deal the difficulties he is facing with. Human beings are flexible and ready to change therefore they can get along with the world and society's changes and have mutual influences as well. On the other hand, Khajeh believes that mankind is a creature who is in the middle level based on the nature and is able to ascend or descend to higher or lower levels. He believes that mankind's upbringings must be on the base of science and knowledge so that they earn happiness and bliss and ascend to higher levels. And the perfection of mankind is in the highest level and it is the very closeness to God. As it is stated Dewey's and Khajeh's perspectives on mankind are different and generally mankind is a biological and social creature and a physical spiritual creature by Dewey and Khajeh attitude respectively. And this different point of views could be the base of different upbringings or educations of them.

Table 3. Ethics and education and training in Dewey and Tusi perspective

Educational variable	Dewey	Tusi
Ethics and Education and Training	It is not good or bad by nature.	Children tend to evil.
	It is not stable and definite.	To basic factors in ethical actions roots are authority and logical soul.
	Society determines the ethics values.	Logical soul differentiates between good and evil.
	Ethics is fallible	Authority provides choice.
	Ethics should be thought according to society ideals at schools	

As it is stated in Table 3, ethics is variable and fallible in Dewey's perspective and it is neither good nor bad from the origin. Since the ethics values of every society are determined by the society then it is essential that the ethics in accordance with society ideals be thought in the schools. On the other hand, Khajeh believes that ethics is subordinate to most of human acquisitions but believes that the child's willing is toward evil at first. Then chooses the speech and identify ethics values.

Table 4. Democracy and education and training in Dewey and Tusi perspective

Educational variable	Dewey	Tusi
Democracy and Education and Training	Democracy is not limited to politics and school is one of the places capable of becoming democratic.	
	Democracy is the requisite of the society and training and education,	
	Democracy means active contribution and not majority of opinions.	In every period of time the society needs a person who is confirmed by God this person is called the owner of honor.
	Improving the cognition of a democratic society is through training and education. And a democratic society is dependent on training and education.	Regular people should follow the experts. And this brings blessing and abundance.
	Revelations and counter revolutions must be accompanied with education.	The formal education is just for males and females are deprived of and they should think about housekeeping and children upbringing.
	In a democratic society training for time and cost economy, preventing social and political corruption, and class conflicts is necessary	
	Training and education is the same for males and females and sex is not a reason for superiority.	

Based on Table 4, from Dewey's perspective democracy is the requisite of the society and training and education and schools are the places capable of being democratic. Democracy contributes to training and education and improves the cognitions of the society and it is necessary to economize time and costs, to prevent social and political corruption and class conflicts. Training and education is the same for males and females and sex is not a reason for superiority and males and females can contribute in training and educations equally. But in Khajeh's perspective in every period of time the society needs a person who is confirmed by God and this brings blessing and abundance and formal educations are limited to males.

## 8. Conclusion

Mankind is a biological and sociable creature in Dewey's perspective and is ready for changes and reining new experiences, he influences the environment and gets influences from it. Therefore, human training must be experimental and be toward mutual effect of peoples on the environment. He believes that problem solving is an appropriate method for training children in which the training is active and the result will be gained. On the other hand, Khajeh believes that although mankind is evil by nature, he generally believes that human beings are in the middle level and by appropriate or inappropriate education could ascend or descend in higher or lower levels. Of course getting to the highest level and ascending is the very closeness to God, as he believes, and his main emphasis is on logical method. Ethics is variable and fallible based of Dewey's perspective and it is not good or bad originally. Since the ethics values of every society are determined by the society then it is essential that the ethics be in accordance with society ideals. On the other hand, Khajeh believes that ethics is subordinate to most of human acquisitions but believes that the child's willing is toward evil at first. Then they choose the speech and identify ethics values. From Dewey's perspective, democracy is the requisite of the society and following that the requisite of training and education and the school is one of the important places capable of being democratic. As an important factor in training and education, democracy improves the society's cognition, trains time and cost economy, prevents social and political corruption and class conflict. In Dewey's training and education in a democratic society males or females are not superior or inferior and both sexes can have equal contributions in formal training and education. But in Khajeh's perspective the society, in every era, demands a person confirmed by God and this brings worldly and hereafter blessing and abundance. Formal education is just for male and females are prevented to read and write and they are even prohibited to hear some Chapters of Quran like Yusuf since he believes that it had bad effects on them. Based on mentioned argumentation it could be concluded that Dewey and Nasi-al-Din-al-Tusi differences about mankind, ethics, and democracy are more than their similarities. These differences were effective on their training and education's perspectives and have made them to have different attitudes toward their methods and objectives. It should be mentioned that these differences are highly bound to their differences in place, time, the society, relatives and people around, schools of thought, and intellectual resources that are the reasons of their different attitudes.

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