Comparing the Cognitive-Developmental Approach and Islamic Mysticism with an Emphasis on Ethical Education

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Abstract

This essay analytically compares ethical education in Piaget’s view and Islamic mysticism from a cognitive-developmental perspective. In doing so, the essay is divided into five sections. An analytical-deductive methodology has been used in the essay. Given the methodology, the present essay can be considered a philosophical study with a substantive approach. In the first and second steps, the notion of ethical education is explored in Islamic mysticism and the cognitive-developmental approach. In the third step, ethical education in the cognitive-developmental approach is compared with ethical education in Islamic mysticism. Finally, the prospect of ethical education in the cognitive-developmental approach and Islamic mysticism is studied.

Keywords: Cognitive-developmental, Ethical education, Islamic mysticism.
Introduction:
The parameters of reasoning and thinking about behaviors that are related to ethical issues and the degree of one’s reflective power, i.e. the governing philosophical system and mode of thought, play a pivotal role in reacting to ethical issues. Furthermore, the cognitive faculty, intention and mental states help shape a person’s ethical behavior (Helwig et al., 2001: 86; Lindskold and Han, 1986: 130).

Since ethical reasoning is a product of ethical maturation, it is necessary to delineate the etymological meaning of the term. Ethical maturation is a process by which people become capable of adapting their behavior to the right or wrong criteria. The large existing literature on ethical maturation shows that ethical maturation is in direct relationship with a human being’s nature (Kolbi et al. 1983; Goodbal, 1990; Diwal, 1996). The effective factor in ethical maturation is the growing of thought and reflective power.

Ethics (morality) and mysticism are two traditional sciences with a well-established scientific basis and large and rich literature. Since ethics and practical mysticism address practice, action and behavior they are highly related to education, cognition and development. In the process of mystic development, some mystics have paid an enormous amount of attention to the betterment of one’s ethical virtues and characteristics as prerequisites for becoming a true mystic. This explains why ethics or morality is one of the ten stages in the journey of mystics. This highlights the interconnectedness of mysticism, ethics and ethical education. In fact, some have taken these to be the same thing. However, despite many similarities they are two separate sciences with distinct aims and topics. Discussing the similarities and relationships between these two sciences goes beyond the scope of the present essay. Categorization of the sciences and specialization make scholars to have a clearer understanding of the two sciences, that is, ethical education and practical mysticism. It is obvious that a clearer understanding of these two sciences contributes to a more coherent and effective approach and in turn can facilitate their efficiency and especial Practicality.

The present essay intends to investigate the issues of cognitive development and Islamic mysticism in relation to ethical education. Since principles possess one of the most fundamental positions in the process of education and development, we have tried to use this as a strategic starting point to look at ethical education from these two perspectives. An analytical-deductive method was used to explore and compare the cognitive-developmental approach and Islamic mysticism, mainly, practical mysticism. Literature review was also used to finally offer principles for ethical education from these two perspectives.

First step: Mysticism and ethical education
Mysticism means intuition, insight, cognition and awareness. It refers to a special mode of knowledge. A form of knowledge which is based on intuition and presence and which can be achieved through various mystic and spiritual ways and quests. The main topics of Islamic mysticism are the Almighty God, Names of God and His actions. The concept of “mysticism” can be used in two senses: theoretical (nazari) and practical (amali) mysticism. Theoretical mysticism, sometimes referred to as the science of observation or the science of exploration is a kind of worldview and mystic insight which includes mystic theology, mystic cosmology and mystic anthropology (Motahari, 1980, vol. 23, p. 328).
Sufism and mystic quests refer to an esoteric mode of science which is directed at rectifying one’s inner being through heart-felt communications, by extricating one’s self from chains and shackles and by embellishing one’s being with things which bring salvation. If such a form of esoteric science is directed to the study of the relationship between God and His creatures and to the finding of unity out of plurality – while recognizing their differences – it can lead to the science of observation and intuition (Fanari, 2005, p. 27).

There are two view with regard to practical mysticism: one of them, as cited above, refers to gaining knowledge and cognition about the stages and stations of mystic quest and journey. The other refers to the practical embarking on the mystic journey or quest and travelling through the stages and stations. Some definitions of mystical education closely corresponds to the definition of ethical education. For example, Abu Muhammad Hariri notes that Sufism is “going towards anything which is good and leaving that which is bad” (EbadiMarvazi, 1983, p. 33).

Ethical education within the paradigm of mysticism means the general principles and rules which can be singled out from the anthropological, epistemological and ontological basis of mysticism. These can help a mystic teacher to come up with certain creative methods and thus help the trainee in his/her mystic journey and quest to reach the final destination. In the same vein, the principles of ethical education are descriptive and general principles which are deduced from the basic rules of mystical education and then used as a resource for ethical education.

The principles of ethical education in Islamic mysticism:

1. The principle of graduality
   The first principle to be taken into account in any kind of education is the principle of graduality. Among Islamic thinkers in ethics and mysticism, Ghazali represents the orientation that emphasizes mystical education in ethical education. Mystical education has a close connection with the principle of graduality in education. In Ghazali’s view, graduality is a tradition and divine rule (Ghazali, N.d., vol. 1, p. 88).

   With regard to the principle of graduality in ethical education, Ghazali proposes two views: a general approach related to the human abilities and a particular approach in learning the science of ethics.

   In the general approach, Ghazali refers to graduality as the coordination of the process of education with the gradual maturation of the trainee. This means that similar to the gradual growth of human abilities, education must be coordinated with this process of growth. One cannot precipitate or delay education in relation to the cognitive-affective development of the child. Accordingly, the teacher/trainer/educationalist must be aware of the graduality of the characteristics and abilities of the trainee. Such graduality is vital for human life because if the reasoning faculty of the child had been complete before birth he/she would have been amazed at birth so much so that he/she would even deny coming to this world. The child would have faced an environment which does not have the least similarity to a previous environment (Ghazali, 1994m, p. 23).

2. The principle of individuality
   One of the principles of ethical education is that such form of education can be applied to anyone no matter what class or condition he/she belongs to. However, mystical education in contrast to ethical education does not assume that such educational rules can be applied to anyone. One of
the educational principles that all mystics followed themselves and encouraged others to follow too was the fact that mystical education requires a prepared person, prepared in terms of spirituality. Plans for mystical journeys and quests can be given to everyone. Therefore, mystic gurus emphasized individuality (choosing certain individuals) in their writings and educational programs.

3. The principle of the sequentiosity of stages and levels
Another important principle in mystical education is the consecutiveness and sequentiosity of the existence’s levels and stations. Ethical concepts do not have sequentiosity with regard to the process of education, i.e. it is not necessary to begin with a special concept in the process of ethical development and then move on in an organized sequence of stages. On the contrary, mystical stages and levels are sequential. This principle connotes two things: first, the stages come after another and second, the stages are different in terms of their level and significance.

The principle of sequentiosity in mysticism refers to the fact that reaching a future stage or level depends on reaching previous stages and levels. Unless one stage is not successfully reached one cannot move on the next stage. If you do so it will be futile. This principle is the by-product of mysticism’s understanding of human beings. According to this principle, to realize a higher order of things we must realize the lower order of things. This view indicates that a human being has an animal, spiritual and divine self. Each of these stages require different approaches and reflections.

1. Reflecting on the subordinate reasoning,
2. Reflecting on the essence itself, and
3. Reflecting on the superior.

The sequence with regard to the stages of each category is as follows: the trainee (of mystical education) must possess more secondary values as he/she moves from one stage to a stage in a higher order.

The sequence of these stages can be compared to the sequence of goods to kinds whereby a person in a superior order is imagined by a person in a subordinate order while the former has also possessed what the latter does have. As Kashani notes, the sequence of stages and levels is not similar to a ladder. Rather, anyone who has reached a higher step should have passed from a lower step and should have also freed himself from dependency to a lower step. Accordingly, each of the one hundred stages is divided into ten kinds. When the stages are multiplied with the kinds a thousand stage is achieved. In such categorization, all the initial stages and levels have their effect in other kinds.

The level of the stages in the highest order in relation to the previous kinds is measured by taking into account that any stage in the high order has a form in the initial stages. However, there is a large distance between the form in the initial and the form in the high order because an uninitiated person carries his actions himself/herself while the actions done by a person in the highest order is by God (Kashani, 2006, pp. 120-121).

4. The principle of the dissolution of individuality
One of the most important and challenging principles in mystical education is the principle of the dissolution of individuality. This is because of the fact that the ultimate goal in mysticism is dissolving one’s own existence in the light of the divine. Accordingly, the trainee in the mystical
journey tries to gradually undermine his/her own individuality and move toward true unity. In explaining this, Stace notes that there is no sense of distinction or plurality in the mystical experience. Accepting that in mystical education a person is directed toward gaining knowledge about “the One”, “the Universal” and “the Absolute” requires accepting also that the individual self who undergoes these mystical experiences must lose his/her own individuality. This view requires the individual to become a non-individual, not someone separate, but someone who is reunited with the absolute or with God, losing his/her own identity (Stace, 2005, p. 112).

As Stace points out this principle is originated in one of the basic ontological assumptions in Islamic mysticism, i.e. individual unity (ibid, p. 114). According to this principle, the trainee in mystical education tries to gradually lose his own individuality and experience an inner mystical event in uniting with God.

It must be noted that the dissolution of individuality is not the same with alienation, the latter being a psychic disorder. Alienation which results in nihilism and absurdism is a personal disorder in which the person ignores his own identity not because of the desire to unite with a sublime truth or dissolution in an absolute being but rather because of spiritual and psychological disorders. In such a scenario truth has been totally ignored rather than becoming the destination to reach. In contradistinction, in mystical dissolution of individuality a person denies his/her own identity because he/she has been integrated into a higher truth and his/her existence has become united with the One.

5. The principle of the centrality of a teacher
Another important principle in mystical education is the centrality of a morshed, ostad or sheikh which can be roughly translated into teacher, trainer or guru. Mowla Abdolsamad Hamedani points out that although there is no consensus among mystics with regard to the necessity of a morshed or sheikh, most mystics emphasize this principle (Hamedani, 2002, vol. 1, p. 381).

It is axiomatic that the existence of a teacher or trainer is fundamental to any form of education. However, in ethical education the role of the teacher is limited to advice, guidance and ethical statements. In ethical education the role of a teacher is not as important as the role a teacher plays in mystical education. In the former, anyone can observe ethical commands on his own accord. The secret behind the necessity for a teacher in mystical education has been emphasized by many. It has been claimed that the reason for the importance of a teacher in mystical education is the inner nature of mystical experience, i.e. the complexities and esoteric nature of mystical education necessitate the need for an ostad or morshed (Yasrebi, 2010, p. 144).

6. The principle of the centrality of religion
Another important principle in any form of Islamic education is the interconnectedness of religion and education. This has been discussed in ethical education by highlighting the role of Islamic mysticism. Generally, studying the writings of most authentic mystics shows that in the different mystical stages there should never be any action in opposition to religion and even an action is opposed to religion the mystic will not reach the destination. Let us make some examples. Ibn Arabi points out that “religion is a lighted path which is passageway for the seekers of happiness. Anyone who walks on this path reaches freedom and those turn away from it are doomed” (Ibn Arabi, N.d., vol. 3, p. 69).
Ghoshiri notes that “religion is the order to be faithfully subservient to truth and the role of governance. Any religion which is not bound to truth is unacceptable and any truth which is not bound to religion is destined to futility (Ghoshiri, 1982, p. 127).

7. The principle of outer transformation
It must be born in mind that the origin of this principle as well as the principle of inner transformation lies in one of the most fundamental anthropological concepts in Islamic perspective, that is, the relationship between the effects of appearance on the inner conditions of a human being. The word “appearance” refers to all visible actions and states of human beings and is mostly represented by the material body. The word “inner” refers to those invisible states such as intention, thought and other spiritual aspects of human beings. Therefore, a human being is made of both interior and exterior layers which influence one another (Bagheri, 1991, p. 22).

Given the fact one’s appearance is effective in shaping his/her inner states, paying attention to the transformations in appearance is important for both ethical and mystical education. Therefore, as a rule in ethical education one can mention the saying that if you are not patient, impersonate patience, and if you are not sad, impersonate sorrow. Basically, in ethical or mystical education the roots of inculcation or imposition of something on the self goes back to this principle. Similarly, mantra and repeating words has been emphasized as an aspect of the external effects. So has been the issue of environmental reclusiveness as an external factor which immensely effects the inner journey of a person.

8. The principle of inner transformation
Another principle with a similar basis is the principle of inner transformation. If we assume that the inner state of a human being effects his/her appearance one can propose the general rule that inner transformation is a necessity. Certain methods can be deduced from this principle with regard to both ethical and mystical education. For example, the fact that wordless mantra or inner purification has been emphasized in mystical education bears witness to the importance of this principle.

Second step: Ethical education in cognitive-developmental approach
Piaget (1932) believes that similar to cognitive development, ethical development or growth is achieved through certain stages. In light of his enormous amount of clinical research he proposed the theory of ethical development. His theory focuses on how children follow certain rules and is made of four stages: the first stage (two to four years old) where the children have no real knowledge about what is ethical and what is not ethical. In fact, in this stage, the child has no knowledge about a complex form of ethical reasoning which is based on a theory of ethics. The child imagines that ethical rules are stable and unchangeable.

The second stage (five to seven) is called ethical realism by Piaget. In this stage, the child does not ask any questions about the intention or rightness/wrongness of actions of laws even if he/she is not inclined to follow those rules. Piaget discusses two interesting points about absolutism. Most children in the second stage show a concrete and practical level of responsibility, i.e. they evaluate ethical situations in terms of concrete and physical consequences. In complex ethical issues these children assume that actions which cause more damage are less ethical than those which cause lesser damage. They hardly pay attention to the intention. Although it is not boldly visible in this stage when rule-observation emerges in
children their thoughts are highly similar to absolutist thought. In this stage, social rules are expressed in terms of following the other. Rules and laws are made and managed from an outside autocratic source, mostly by the parents. For the children these rules appear to be unchangeable. In the third stage (eight to eleven) the children come gradually to understand that only those rules are acceptable which are made for helping or protecting others and thus one needs not to simply follow the rules and laws made by others. Rather, each person makes a decision with regard to participating with others. Furthermore, the growing cognitive ability allows the children in this stage to include new factors in their ethical judgments. Any person is assumed to have an intention when doing something and the consequence of behaviors become important in this stage. In this stage, being ethical is dependent on a present evaluation in relation to other factors and situations. For Piaget, the third level in this stage is ethical relativism. In the last stage, the children begin to develop their ethical reasoning beyond the personal level and well into the social and political levels. The teenagers in this level may become interested in other issues like protecting the environment or helping the homeless people. Piaget believes that social experiences play an important role in moving from one stage to another. In the initial years of a life, the child learns that the parent usually dictate certain rules coercively. The children tend to follow their parents because of the latter’s power and also because the children want to adapt themselves to the surrounding environment. Nevertheless, there is an inherent factor in children which makes them express their ideas later on and find out that they can ask questions about different views. Gradually and along with their interaction with their peers another factor, called socialization, begins to emerge in the children (Piaget 1932; Damdon 1983, cited in Karimi 2006: 12).

Following Piaget, some researchers have found similar age trends in children’s understanding of lying. In response to the question, “What will happen if I lie?” young children (five to six) tend often to cite the power structure or an eternal factor, for example, “we will become ill or we will get into trouble”. However, older children (eleven to twelve) consider a guilty conscience and loss of trust as the consequences of lying. For young children, it is rare to think of the invisible consequences of lying while for older children it is more likely to pay attention to the psychological intentions and causes (Peterson et al, 1983: 1531).

Since young children consider lying or cheating absolutely and always as wrong, they come to lie or cheat without remorse. For Piaget this paradox can be explained by the fact that the coordination between action and conscience will not be achieved until when the child recognizes the basic reasons for why it is wrong to lie or cheat. The absolutist and at the same time superficial ethics in young children is called the ethics of following others by Piaget which is precisely the dominance of others’ rules, especially the powerful adults. On the other hand, it is less likely for a child who through interacting with his/her peers has come to a correct understanding of the invisible reasons for ethical rightness to lie or cheat. In such cases, the child has an inner feeling which makes him/her treat others in a way he/she would like to be treated by others. This developed form of ethics is called self-dependent ethics by Piaget which means following the “self-constructed rules”. A developed form of ethical judgment creates a motivational basis for the coordination of action and conscience.

Ethical evaluation refers to a person’s view about rules, customs, traditions and norms which are expected to be observed while interacting with others. It also refers to a person’s
understanding of these issues. Such an understanding develops alongside with developments in ethics and reasoning and becomes evolved as the person grows (Piaget, 1932; Damdon, 1983, cited in Karimi, 2006: 11).

Although Piaget’s theory addresses the stages of child development for the most part some aspects of his work deals with ethical development too. Piaget believes that a child’s ethical thought goes through a series of double stages. When the children are four or five years old their ideas on ethical issues are controlled by their parents and adults. This is a sign of the primary stage in ethical development, i.e. “coercive ethics”. From about ten years old, a child comes to be influenced by his/her peers and is inclined toward “ethical independence” or “cooperation ethics”. This latter stage is called ethical maturation.

For Piaget, the essence of ethics lies in rules and respecting these rules. One finds the basis of all ethics in the respect that a person has toward these rules. Children at five to nine years old, consider ethical rules as sacred, unchangeable and set by a higher power. Therefore, this age is called “ethical realism”. The most important characteristic of this stage (ethical realism) is a sense of in-betweenness, i.e. the child’s limited ability to make a distinction between him/herself and the outer world.

A child attributes his/her mental traits to the outer world and is not able to recognize that there are other thoughts than his/her own. Therefore, from a child’s perspective, ethical rules have an objective reality. However, in later stages the child gains a new awareness through interacting with his/her peers or with adults. In these stages, issues like cooperation, interaction and mutual respect become important for the child as well as issues like justice which is the result of mutual satisfaction or social contract. As a consequence, cooperation ethics or “ethical relativism” become significant.

In studying the development of ethical judgments and thoughts Piaget uses two main methods:

1. First he tried to find out the developments in children’s views about the rules of such common games as Dib (with glass marbles) in parallel with their age maturation. Piaget conducted these researches by directly observing the world of children’s play.

2. The second method was to recount a story to the children to then to study the changes that have occurred in their judgments about the importance of sinning and transgressing the rules by asking questions like, “Why and to what degree the character of the story has gone on the wrong way?”

The stages of ethical development in Piaget’s view:

For Piaget, in children, ethical concepts have a stable and unchanging sequence in proportion to their cognitive development. This begins with a primary stage called “ethical realism” and is transformed to a more complete stage called “cooperation ethics” or “consensus ethics”. No one can achieve a more complete stage without going through the realism stage. The first stage of child ethical development occurs somewhere between four to seven years old and the second stage begins when a child is nine or ten or more years old. Therefore, the years during seven to nine is a transition stage between the first and the second stages in which different forms of thought from both the first and second stage show themselves. It must be noted that before four years old there is no place for ethical rules and orders for the child. In fact, the child in this age
only follows its own pleasures and enjoyments. It is perhaps for this reason that Piaget places the beginning of ethical development after this age. Some scholars have used Piaget’s views to refer to this age as the stage of “unfollowing”. For Piaget, children in this age have little knowledge about the rules and their games are not played according to rules or with the aim of winning. If for example we observe two three-year-old children playing Dib we will notice that each child has its own rules. For them the only aim of playing is pleasure and enjoyment.

In Piaget’s ethical theory, ethical maturation means that a person cooperates equally with others, accepts personal responsibility, is flexible about opposing views, is patient, and committed to his/her ethical stances and contracts with others not because of coercion but rather on his/her own choice.

Piaget believed in the coherence between the findings in child psychology and ethical education and historical and sociological analyses of western philosophers. For his historical change of human culture could be divided into early periods and the government of the old people which has in the course of time extricated itself from those restrictions and constraints and moved toward democracy. For him the ultimate level of historical evolution was culture.

The first stage: ethical development and ethical realism. In this stage which happens in parallel with the period of objective logical operation the child has an immense respect and attention toward the rules. In the child’s view, the rules are the product of external powers such as parents and therefore they are stable and unchangeable; even the passage of time cannot undermine these rules. The dominant view in this stage is “ethical absolutism” i.e. all rules are stable and unchangeable in the child’s views. These rules are assumed to tolerate no change or transformation. In this view, any form of transgression will inevitably lead to punishment, that is, someone or something will finally punish the criminal or the sinner.

It is related to the belief in “natural justice”. He says that the child considers punishment as the mechanical and natural response to disobeying rules and thus anxiously awaits punishment after committing any form of transgression. For example, a child who has lied to its mother and who may accidentally fall off his bicycle and hurt his leg would say: this is the punishment for the lie I told to mom.

The child’s evaluation of the wrongness of an action and its foreboding nature in this stage is done only on the premise of “objective/concrete consequences” and good/bad intentions do not have any role in the evaluation. For example, when a young child hears that a boy has broken fifteen cups while helping his mother and another child has inadvertently broken one cup while in the absence of his mother he was trying to take a cookie from the shelf he would say: the first boy has done something worse because he broken fifteen cups. In the child’s view, the amount of damage and the consequence of an action are the criteria for ethical judgement. In this stage, the child is not able to use its own experiences as to perceive the external world in line with other. In other words, the child is still in the stage of in-betweenness. The child is not still able to understand that the basis of all rules is mutual or multi-sided contracts aimed at the coordination of different goals. Therefore, the dominant attitude in this stage is “ethical following of others”.

The second step: ethical development and cooperation ethics. This stage begins by the entrance of the child into the third period, that is, the period of formal actions and continues in parallel to the cognitive development and development in thinking about ethical issues. Most of the ethical
judgments of the teenager in this stage about social rules are “relativist”, i.e. the rules and laws for the teenager mean a series of contractual and arbitrary agreements which are susceptible to skepticism or even interpretation.

Obeying people like parents who are in a position of power is neither necessary nor always appropriate. Similarly, disobey and transgression are not always wrong and do not necessarily lead to punishment.

Another characteristic of this stage is the fact that in judging somebody’s behavior in addition to the concrete consequences of the action the feelings and views of the people are also taken into account. In a teenager’s view, the punishment for an action must always be proportionate to the intentions of the doer, the essence of transgression and the motivation behind opposition. Accordingly, the punishment for a wrong action must be applied in a way as to either compensate for the damage or to at least remind the wrongdoer to act better in a similar situation. In Piaget’s ethical theory, ethical maturation means that the person should cooperate equally with others, take personal responsibilities, act flexibly about opposing views, practice patience and remain committed to his/her ethical obligations not because of the force of others but rather on a free choice basis.

Conclusion:
In the third step of comparing ethical education in the cognitive-developmental approach and Islamic mysticism it should be noted that ethical education is one of the necessities that everyone from any walks of life needs. In ethical education, ethical reasoning has always been empathized as a fundamental principle. According to some philosophical views, the basis of ethical behavior is rational cognition. Therefore, ethical education should be practiced in line with rational education. Rationality can determine the principles and basis of ethics. Personal and social ethical life must be based on rationality. Such a philosophical view has had an immense influence on the domain of psychology and education. Most cognitive theories and models about ethics are in line with the aforementioned philosophical view. Piaget’s research and the following deduction on children’s ethical judgments show that a child’s ethical development is formed in relation to its cognitive structures. Therefore, similar to other aspects of mental development, the stages of ethical development in human beings are dependent on cognitive structures and the emergence of new mental capacities. The cognitive-developmental approach implicitly acknowledges that a system of education needs to focus on the rational and cognitive development of students to foster ethical education. In other words, knowing ethical behaviors and values leads to ethical education. Therefore, the most important aspect of ethical education is to improve the knowledge of students about ethics. Since expecting an ethical conduct by only relying on superficial forms of knowledge which are imposed on a person from the outside is not possible ethical education requires another form of knowledge which is rooted in inner or essential awareness and enlightenment. This latter form of awareness and knowledge is the result of self-purification. Achieving ethical virtues without paying attention to purification can lead to dangerous pitfalls and damages because in such a scenario the virtues are not internalized and have just a superficial and formal presence. This can cause misunderstandings in a person as to make him/her assume that he/she has achieved the climax of ethical virtues and will inevitably lead to egoism and vanity. On the other hand, the aim of ethical education is gaining essential
knowledge, that is, moving toward an intuitive form of knowledge and awakening to the light of truth. It is obvious that of ethical education is limited to fostering virtues without paying attention to purification it will never achieve the sublime goals of education. With regard to whether ethical values and virtues are teachable or not and also how they are effective in the mystical and cognitive development of a person it must be pointed out that having knowledge and awareness about something does not guarantee that it will be turned into action. Rather, this requires decision and tendency in a person as a motivation to carry out an action. Aristotle and Plato consider wisdom and reason as the highest form of salvation. According to this view, practicing reason leads to a better judgment and evaluation. Therefore, strengthening the faculty of reason is the surest path for ethical education in higher levels. Sequentiality of levels has often been used as to describe the details of the stages of mystical journeys. In such a mystical sequence of levels or stages, mystical education is not conceptualized in terms of climbing up a ladder. Rather, reaching any stage necessitates reaching a previous stage. In other words, unless a stage is reached one cannot move to a next stage. Moreover, these stages are arranged in a way as to give the person on the mystical journey more qualifications as he/she reaches a higher order. These issues indicate the complexities and coherence of the process of mystical quest in contrast to ethical development and education.

The role of individuality and individual will are two of the important things in mystical and cognitive-developmental education. In mystical quest it is expected that a person gradually lose his/her own individuality and will and be dissolved in a deep and coherent understanding of being. The mystic becomes freed from his/her own conceptions and will and integrates his/her own existence in the absolute being. The final point worth mentioning is that mystical education is highly complex because of its esoteric nature and is hardly possible for a person to go through these stages without the guidance of a teacher.
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