

The Concept of Moral Education in Ibn Miskawaih's Perspective: A Philosophical Analysis of Tahdzib Al-Akhlak

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ABSTRACT

The moral crisis afflicting contemporary education demands the revitalization of a comprehensive concept of moral education. This study examines Ibn Miskawaih's thought on moral education through an in-depth analysis of the book *Tahdzib al-Akhlaq wa Tathhir al-A'raq*. This research is a library research study with a philosophical-analytical approach. Data were collected from the primary source of *Tahdzib al-Akhlaq* and relevant secondary sources, then analyzed using descriptive-analytical methods and content analysis. The research findings indicate that Ibn Miskawaih's concept of moral education is based on four cardinal virtues (*al-fadha'il al-arba'ah*): wisdom (*al-hikmah*), courage (*al-syaja'ah*), temperance (*al-'iffah*), and justice (*al-'adalah*). Miskawaih views morality as a state of the soul that can be changed through education and habituation (*ta'wid*). The proposed educational methods include the natural method (*thariqun thabi'iy*), habituation, exemplary conduct, and *Riyadhah* (spiritual training). The concept of the middle way (*al-washath*) becomes a fundamental principle in achieving moral virtues, integrating Aristotle's rational approach with Islamic *shari'ah* values. This research contributes to the development of Islamic education theory by offering a philosophical framework that integrates reason and revelation in character formation. The implication is that moral education must be designed holistically, considering the psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions of learners and creating a conducive environment that supports moral transformation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The character education crisis afflicting the contemporary world signifies the failure of educational systems in forming morally noble human beings. Phenomena such as student delinquency, corruption among educated elites, hedonism, and other forms of moral degradation demonstrate that education has lost its moral essence. Modern education tends to be materialistic and intellectualistic, neglecting the

spiritual and moral dimensions that constitute the essence of humanity. This condition worsens with the flow of globalization, which brings negative impacts in the form of value relativism and moral identity crisis. Various immoral actions—ranging from student brawls, drug abuse, promiscuity, to massive corruption in various institutions—serve as clear indicators that the educational system has failed to form strong character.

The root of this problem lies in an educational paradigm that separates intellectual development from character formation. Since the Enlightenment era, Western tradition has laid epistemological foundations that separate facts from values, reason from morality, and science from religion. As a result, modern education produces individuals who are intellectually intelligent but spiritually and morally impoverished. They master science and technology but lack a moral compass to use that knowledge for the good of humanity. This phenomenon has been criticized by various educational thinkers, from Paulo Freire who critiqued banking education to Ivan Illich who called for the liberation of society from the shackles of institutionalized schooling.

Islam as a perfect religion places morality as the main mission of Muhammad's prophethood. A hadith narrated by Bukhari and Abu Dawud states: "Indeed, I was sent to perfect noble character" (HR. Bukhari and Abu Dawud). The perfection of a person's faith and Islam is measured by the quality of their character, as stated in the hadith: "The most perfect believers in faith are those with the best character" (HR. at-Tirmidzi). This shows that moral education is not merely complementary but is the core of Islamic education itself. The Quran affirms that the Prophet was sent as an exemplar of perfect character: "And indeed, you are of a great moral character" (QS. al-Qalam: 4). Thus, education in Islam cannot be separated from the formation of noble character.

In the history of Islamic thought, Ibn Miskawaih (d. 421 AH/1030 CE) is known as a pioneer of moral philosophy who built a comprehensive ethical system through his magnum opus, *Tahdzib al-Akhlaq wa Tathhir al-A'raq*. This work became a primary reference in teaching morality in the Islamic world and was even used as a handbook by Muhammad Abduh in teaching ethics. The uniqueness of Miskawaih's thought lies in his rational-philosophical approach without abandoning the foundation of Islamic law, harmoniously integrating the intellectual heritage of Greece with Islamic values. Unlike theologians who tended toward textualism, Miskawaih endeavored to build an ethical system based on a deep understanding of the human soul and the psychological laws that govern it.

Miskawaih lived during the golden age of Islamic civilization, when centers of learning such as Baghdad, Rayy, and Isfahan became intellectual beacons of the world. He interacted with various traditions of knowledge—Greek philosophy, Persian wisdom, and Islamic teachings—and sought to synthesize them within a coherent epistemological framework. As a librarian, treasurer, and advisor to several rulers, Miskawaih had direct access to vast intellectual treasures. His practical experience in government administration also gave him insight into the complexity of socio-political life, which later colored his thinking on moral education that is not only individual but also socio-political in nature.

The relevance of Miskawaih's thought to the current context is highly significant. Amid the dominance of the positivistic paradigm that separates education from moral values, Miskawaih's concept of moral education offers a holistic alternative paradigm. His approach, which emphasizes balance between reason and revelation, individual and society, as well as material and spiritual dimensions, can be a solution to the dichotomy plaguing contemporary education. In the era of postmodernity characterized by value fragmentation and moral relativism, Miskawaih's concept of the middle way offers an ethical methodology that balances universalism and particularism. Therefore, this study aims to explore Ibn Miskawaih's concept of moral education in *Tahdzib al-Akhlaq* to discover philosophical principles that can be implemented in the context of contemporary Islamic education.

2. METHODS

This research employs a qualitative method with a library research approach. This type of research is classified as descriptive-analytical research aimed at revealing, understanding, and analyzing the concept of moral education in Ibn Miskawaih's thought. The research paradigm used is interpretivism

with a philosophical hermeneutic approach, allowing the researcher to understand textual meaning as well as the historical-cultural context underlying Miskawaih's thought. The primary data source for this research is the book *Tahdzib al-Akhlaq wa Tathhir al-A'raq* by Abu Ali Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Miskawaih. Secondary data sources include literature discussing Miskawaih's thought, works on Islamic educational philosophy, Islamic ethics, and comparative studies with other Muslim thinkers such as al-Ghazali, al-Farabi, and Ibn Sina.

Data collection techniques were conducted through documentation, namely searching for and collecting data from books, notes, transcripts, and other documents relevant to the research focus. The data collection process was carried out systematically by identifying, cataloging, and classifying literature based on main themes in moral education. The collected data were then analyzed using content analysis methods with a hermeneutic-philosophical approach. The data analysis process includes: (1) data reduction, namely sorting and focusing data on aspects relevant to the concept of moral education; (2) data display, namely presenting data in the form of systematic narratives describing inter-conceptual relationships; (3) verification and drawing conclusions through comprehensive philosophical interpretation considering the historical and epistemological context of Miskawaih's thought. Data validity was maintained through source triangulation by comparing various primary and secondary literature, as well as repeated readings of the original text of *Tahdzib al-Akhlaq* to ensure accurate and contextual understanding. The reliability of interpretation was maintained through consistency of the analytical framework and transparency of the interpretation process.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Nature of Morality and Its Possibility of Change

Ibn Miskawaih defines morality as a state of the soul (*hal li al-nafs*) that drives a person to perform actions without prior thought or consideration. This definition emphasizes the aspect of spontaneity and habituation in moral conduct. Morality is not merely theoretical knowledge of good and evil but rather a disposition of the soul that has been firmly embedded, producing actions automatically. This concept aligns with Aristotle's understanding of virtue as *habitus* or ingrained habit. However, Miskawaih provides an Islamic nuance to this concept by emphasizing that the true source of virtue is the *shari'ah* revealed by Allah, not merely social conventions or human agreements.

Miskawaih's definition distinguishes morality from actions performed occasionally or actions planned rationally. Someone who gives charity once or twice is not necessarily generous unless they have made generosity a permanent disposition in their soul, so that they give spontaneously without lengthy consideration. Similarly, someone who performs a brave act after lengthy consideration and with hesitation cannot yet be called truly brave. True courage is when someone spontaneously faces danger when truth and justice demand it, without paralyzing fear. This is what Miskawaih means by morality as a firm and permanent state of the soul.

A fundamental issue in moral philosophy is whether morality can be changed or is fixed as innate. Miskawaih firmly states that morality can be changed through education and habituation (*ta'wid*). He criticizes deterministic views that regard morality as static. His argument is pragmatic: if morality cannot be changed, then commands, prohibitions, advice, and punishments would be useless. The entire system of law and ethics would become absurd if humans did not have the ability to change their behavior. In fact, humans demonstrate the ability to change their behavior through education and training, as a shy person can become brave and a miser can become generous through continuous habituation.

Miskawaih quotes Aristotle who argued that evil people or those with bad character can change through education, although not absolutely. Continuous teaching and education along with good guidance will have different effects on different people. Some of them accept education quickly while others accept it slowly in moving toward virtue. This indicates that although morality can be changed, the degree of change and speed of transformation differ for each individual. These differences relate to

various factors: innate temperament, developmental environment, past experiences, and the intensity of educational efforts received.

However, Miskawaih acknowledges the existence of individual differences in receiving moral education. Some people easily accept education quickly, while others require more time. These differences relate to temperament (*mizaj*) which is an innate bodily constitution. Temperament is a mixture of constitutive elements that form a person's basic character, depending on physical constitution and difficult to change because it contains elements that cannot be influenced by will. However, character in a broader sense can be formed through a combination of internal and external factors. Character depends on innate traits and living environment, including social interaction and education. Therefore, although temperament is relatively fixed, character can be changed and educated.

This is where the importance of religious education lies as a normative foundation that straightens human natural tendencies and prepares them to receive wisdom. Miskawaih emphasizes that parental responsibility is crucial in implementing this religious education. They must use various means, even if necessary using threats of punishment, until children become accustomed to living religiously. However, the punishment meant is not destructive violence but rather educational punishment that is proportional and aims to form character, not merely to punish. Religious habituation from an early age will form a solid moral foundation, which can then be developed through wisdom education at subsequent stages.

Soul Structure and Moral Virtues

The foundation of Miskawaih's ethical thought lies in the tripartite concept of the soul adopted from Plato and Aristotle. The human soul consists of three powers: (1) the rational soul (*al-nafs al-nathiqah*), namely the power of thinking that distinguishes humans from other creatures and is the true essence of humanity; (2) the animal soul (*al-nafs al-bahimiyyah* or *al-syahwaniyyah*), namely the power that produces appetitive desires such as eating, drinking, sexual needs, and various biological requirements; (3) the bestial soul (*al-nafs al-sabu'iyyah* or *al-ghadhabiyah*), namely the power that produces emotions such as courage, anger, ambition, and the drive for self-defense. These three powers are not separate entities located in different places but rather potentials inherent in one substance of the human soul that is immaterial and eternal.

The tripartite soul concept is not Miskawaih's originality but rather an inheritance from Greek philosophical tradition which was then adapted and Islamized. Plato in the Republic depicts the soul as a chariot pulled by two horses: a white horse symbolizing spirit (*thymos*) and a black horse symbolizing appetite (*epithymia*), with a charioteer symbolizing reason (*logos*). Aristotle developed this concept by dividing the soul into vegetative, sensitive, and rational souls. Miskawaih adopted this framework but provided theological dimensions by emphasizing that the rational soul is an emanation of Divine light that distinguishes humans from other creatures and makes them vicegerents on earth.

From this soul structure, Miskawaih formulates four cardinal virtues (*al-fadha'il al-arba'ah*) that become the pillars of noble character. First, wisdom (*al-hikmah*) is the virtue of the rational soul that enables a person to know all that exists, both divine and human affairs, and to be able to distinguish what must be done and what must be avoided. Wisdom is not merely factual knowledge but knowledge accompanied by the ability to make correct moral decisions in concrete situations. A wise person knows when to speak and when to remain silent, when to act and when to restrain oneself.

Second, courage (*al-syaja'ah*) is the virtue of the *ghadhabiyah* soul that enables a person to face danger and difficulties with calculation, neither reckless nor cowardly. True courage is not blind recklessness but steadfastness in facing danger for noble purposes. Miskawaih emphasizes that courage must always be accompanied by wisdom; without wisdom, courage will turn into dangerous recklessness. True courage is when someone dares to uphold truth despite facing threats, dares to admit mistakes despite embarrassment, and dares to restrain desires despite difficulty.

Third, temperance or chastity (*al-'iffah*) is the virtue of the *syahwaniyyah* soul that controls desires according to the guidance of reason and *shari'ah*. *Al-'iffah* is not asceticism that rejects all worldly

pleasures but rather a moderate attitude that enjoys pleasures within reasonable limits and in accordance with fitrah (natural disposition). A person who possesses this virtue is not controlled by appetites for food, drink, sex, or wealth possession, but uses all of these as means to achieve higher goals. They eat to live, not live to eat; they seek wealth to give in charity, not to hoard.

Fourth, justice (*al-'adalah*) is the virtue that harmonizes the three soul powers so that each functions according to its proportion without dominating one another. Justice in this context is internal, namely justice within oneself before social justice. When the rational soul leads wisely, the *ghadhabiyah* soul serves courageously yet controllably, and the *syahwaniyyah* soul obeys with full chastity, then internal harmony is created which is called justice. This internal justice then becomes the foundation for external justice in social relationships. A person who is not just to themselves—who allows desires to control their reason—cannot possibly be just to others.

The concept of justice as internal harmony reflects Platonic thought, but Miskawaih Islamizes it by emphasizing that this harmony must conform to *shari'ah* requirements. Justice is not merely mathematical balance but rather the placement of each soul power in its proper position according to its ontological hierarchy. The rational soul must lead because it is Divine light within humans; the *ghadhabiyah* soul becomes an obedient soldier, ready to defend truth but not rebelling against reason; and the *syahwaniyyah* soul is controlled for higher interests, not destroyed or ignored. When this harmony is achieved, true happiness (*al-sa'adah*) is born, which is the ultimate goal of moral education. True happiness is not momentary pleasure but rather a condition of a tranquil soul because it lives according to its fitrah as a rational creature submitting to the Creator.

The Principle of the Middle Way (Al-Washath)

The doctrine of the middle way (*al-washath al-haqiqi*) is the core of Miskawaih's methodology in achieving moral virtues. Every virtue lies between two reprehensible extremes: the extreme of excess (*al-ifrath*) and the extreme of deficiency (*al-tafrith*). Wisdom lies between impudence (*al-safah*) which is the use of reason incorrectly for wrong purposes or in wrong ways, and stupidity (*al-baladah*) which is the freezing or neglect of thinking power. Courage is between recklessness (*al-tahawwur*) which is facing danger without mature calculation, and cowardice (*al-jubn*) which is fleeing from responsibility due to fear. Chastity lies between profligacy (*al-syarah*) which is following every impulse of desire without limits, and frigidity (*al-khumud*) which is killing all natural desires. Justice is between committing tyranny (*al-zulm*) which is taking others' rights, and accepting servility (*al-indzilam*) which is allowing others to trample one's own rights.

This concept of the middle way is not Miskawaih's invention but rather an adoption of Aristotle's mesotes (mean) doctrine which was then Islamized. Aristotle in the Nicomachean Ethics states that virtue is the mean or middle position between two vicious extremes. However, Aristotle himself emphasized that this mean is not a mathematical average but rather a mean relative to us (*pros hemas*). This means that the middle position differs depending on the individual, situation, and context. What constitutes a mean for an athlete differs from the mean for an ordinary person; what constitutes a mean in wartime differs from the mean in peacetime. Miskawaih adopts this dynamic understanding but adds a normative dimension by making *shari'ah* an objective guide.

Miskawaih's concept of the middle way differs fundamentally from contemporary moral relativism. The middle way is not a compromise or arithmetic average between two extremes but rather the correct position (*al-washath al-haqiqi*) according to objective conditions and *shari'ah* requirements. Ahmad Amin criticized this concept by saying that courage is closer to recklessness than to cowardice, and generosity is closer to prodigality than to miserliness. However, this criticism shows an overly mathematical understanding of Aristotle's and Miskawaih's doctrine. The middle position is relative to the subject (individual), time, place, and context, but still based on universal objective principles, namely reason and *shari'ah*. This does not mean there are no objective standards, but rather that the application of these standards must consider the particularity of concrete situations.

Miskawaih provides concrete examples to explain this concept. In eating, the mean or middle way is not eating the same amount for everyone. A fighter or athlete requires more food intake than a philosopher who spends time thinking. However, both must avoid the extremes of gluttony (overeating to the point of damaging health) and starvation (eating too little to the point of being unable to function). The measure is the objective needs of each individual's body, not merely subjective taste or desire. In this context, *shari'ah* provides general guidance (such as the prohibition of excess), while reason applies it in concrete situations.

A significant difference between Miskawaih and Aristotle lies in the criterion for determining the middle way. Aristotle argued that practical reason (*phronesis*) alone is the tool for determining the appropriate mean in every situation. Miskawaih emphasizes that reason must be combined with *shari'ah*. This integration of reason and revelation reflects the unique synthesis Miskawaih made between Greek philosophical tradition and Islamic teachings. Reason provides the ability to understand general principles and apply them in concrete situations, while *shari'ah* provides normative guidance ensuring that moral decisions do not slip into relativism or subjectivism. Thus, Miskawaih avoids two extremes: rigid absolutism that ignores the particularity of situations, and radical relativism that rejects objective standards.

Al-Ghazali later strengthened this view by stating that only the Prophet Muhammad could achieve the middle position perfectly, while ordinary humans can only approach it. Al-Ghazali's view reflects a more pessimistic attitude toward human capacity to achieve moral perfection. However, Miskawaih is more optimistic, viewing that by following certain rules based on reason and *shari'ah*, and through consistent training, a person can achieve the true middle position, although perhaps not as perfect as the prophets. Miskawaih's optimism is pedagogically important because it provides motivation for learners to continue striving to achieve moral virtues without feeling that the goal is impossible to reach.

The spirit of this middle way doctrine is highly Islamic, as many Quranic verses indicate. Surah al-Isra verse 29 states: "And let not your hand be tied to your neck, nor extend it completely and thereby become blamed and insolvent." This verse prohibits two extremes in spending: miserliness (hand tied) and prodigality (excessively extending the hand). Similarly, regarding eating and drinking, the Quran states: "Eat and drink, but do not be excessive" (QS. al-A'raf: 31). In various aspects of life, Islam teaches the principle of moderation and balance, which is consistent with the concept of the middle way philosophically formulated by Miskawaih.

Methods of Moral Education

Miskawaih proposes several practical methods in moral education. First, the natural method (*thariqun thabi'iy*) based on the development of human *fitrah*. Education must be adapted to the psychological and physiological developmental stages of learners. Soul potentials emerge in stages following natural law: beginning with the appetite for food and basic biological needs (vegetative soul), then *ghadhabiyah* desires and love of honor (sensitive soul), finally the inclination toward knowledge and truth (rational soul). Education must follow this natural order, fulfilling the needs of each developmental stage before moving to the next. This concept anticipates modern developmental psychology theories that emphasize the importance of matching educational material with children's developmental stages, as formulated by Jean Piaget, Erik Erikson, and Lawrence Kohlberg.

The main idea of this natural method is that the implementation of educational work should be based on human psychophysical development. Each stage of human development has specific psychophysiological needs, and the way of educating should pay attention to these needs according to the developmental stage. Forcing young children to study abstract concepts requiring formal thinking abilities will result in failure and frustration. Conversely, allowing adolescents to only deal with concrete matters without training abstraction abilities will hinder their intellectual development. Miskawaih keenly observed that education contrary to natural law will fail, just as a farmer who plants in the wrong season will fail to harvest.

Second, the habituation method (*ta'wid*) is the key to character formation. Miskawaih emphasizes that morality is not theoretical knowledge sufficient to be understood intellectually but rather a soul disposition that must be formed through repeated actions. A person does not become generous merely by knowing the definition of generosity or the benefits of charity, but by habitually giving consistently. Similarly, a person does not become honest merely by understanding the importance of honesty, but by habitually speaking the truth even in difficult situations. This habituation must begin from an early age when the soul is still malleable and easily formed, as stated in the Prophet's hadith which recommends teaching prayer to children from the age of seven and disciplining them (if necessary) at the age of ten.

Habituation does not mean repressive coercion or indoctrination that ignores reason. Miskawaih distinguishes between educational habituation and brutal coercion. Educational habituation is a gradual process adapted to the child's abilities, using rewards and punishments proportionally to reinforce positive behavior and eliminate negative behavior. Children are not forced to immediately achieve perfect standards but are guided gradually from easy levels to more difficult ones. For example, in training generosity, children are first habituated to sharing toys with siblings, then sharing food with friends, then setting aside some pocket money for charity, and so on gradually until generosity becomes an inherent character.

Third, the *Riyadhah* method (spiritual training and self-control) is needed to cure soul diseases and achieve moral health. Miskawaih analogizes moral diseases with physical diseases that require proper diagnosis and specific therapy. He compiled a kind of moral pharmacology: every soul disease has its specific remedy. For example, to cure arrogance, a person must train themselves to humble themselves (*tawadhu'*) by deliberately doing things that humble the ego such as serving others, sitting in low places, admitting mistakes publicly, and avoiding all forms of praise and popularity. To overcome excessive anger, they must train themselves to be patient and restrain anger in various provocative situations, even habituating themselves to be gentle with those who hurt them. *Riyadhah* requires strong will, long-term consistency, and guidance from wise teachers who can diagnose the student's soul condition and prescribe training suited to each individual's specific condition.

Miskawaih's concept of *Riyadhah* has similarities with spiritual practices in the Sufi tradition but with a more rational and systematic approach. If in Sufism *Riyadhah* is often esoteric and can only be accessed through murshid guidance, Miskawaih attempts to formulate *Riyadhah* principles that can be understood and practiced more broadly. He provides practical guidance on how to diagnose soul diseases and prescribe their therapy. For example, if someone observes that they are easily angered, they must identify their anger triggers, then gradually train themselves not to respond to these triggers with anger. This training is done consistently until it becomes a new habit replacing the old one.

Fourth, the exemplary method (*uswah hasanah*) through associating with righteous people. Miskawaih emphasizes the influence of the social environment in character formation. Humans are naturally imitative creatures (*homo imitans*); they imitate the behavior of people around them, especially figures they admire and respect. Therefore, educators must be living examples for their students, not merely teachers of moral concepts. Moral education cannot be done only through verbal instruction or moral lectures but requires concrete demonstration in daily life. A teacher who teaches honesty but lies in practice will damage the credibility of their teaching and provide an implicit lesson that honesty is merely rhetoric, not a principle that must be internalized.

This is why the Prophet Muhammad is called the best moral teacher, because he not only taught moral values but embodied them in all aspects of his life. The Prophet's exemplary conduct was so perfect that the companions could learn from every gesture, word, and deed. Aishah r.a. described the Prophet's character briefly but densely: "His character was the Quran." This means that all Quranic teachings were perfectly implemented in the Prophet's personality. Miskawaih emphasizes that today's educators must strive to emulate the Prophet in providing exemplary conduct to their students. Although it is impossible to achieve perfection like the Prophet, at least educators must be consistent between words and deeds, between teachings and practice.

Goals and Social Dimensions of Moral Education

The highest goal of moral education according to Miskawaih is to achieve happiness (*al-sa'adah*). However, the happiness meant is not individualistic hedonism characteristic of modernity but rather true happiness that encompasses self-perfection and contribution to common welfare. Miskawaih distinguishes between pleasure (*al-ladhdhat*) which is temporary and sensual, and happiness (*al-sa'adah*) which is permanent and spiritual. Pleasure depends on the fulfillment of biological desires that are never satisfied; the more they are satisfied, the more they demand. True happiness, conversely, is a condition of a tranquil soul because it has achieved perfection according to its fitrah.

Humans achieve their perfection as humans (*al-kamal al-insani*) when they optimally actualize their rational potential, not when they satisfy their animal desires. Miskawaih quotes Aristotle's opinion that humans among all animal creatures cannot independently perfect their essence as humans but must have help from other human groups. Individual perfection cannot be achieved in isolation but requires a well-organized social life. To humanize humans (*ta'nis al-insan*) means guiding each individual to live according to their human substance, namely thinking power and moral capacity, not drowning in the animal dimension alone. If a racehorse falls short of its perfection and no longer displays behaviors characteristic of it, then its status falls from being a racehorse to being a pack horse. Similarly with humans: when the behavior they produce deviates from rational/mental consideration, they fall to animal status.

The social dimension is very prominent in Miskawaih's concept of moral education. He emphasizes that human perfection cannot be achieved solitarily but requires cooperation and social solidarity (*ta'awun*). Each individual has limitations and needs that can only be fulfilled through others' contributions. No one can produce all their life needs by themselves; they depend on farmers for food, craftsmen for shelter, doctors for health, teachers for knowledge, and so on. Therefore, humans must love one another because each sees their perfection in others. Without love and mutual cooperation, happiness will not be achieved perfectly. Each person is a member of the societal body as a whole; the perfection of the social body depends on the perfection of each of its members, just as the perfection of the human body depends on the perfection of each organ.

Miskawaih states that the best of people are those who do good to family, siblings, relatives, descendants, colleagues, neighbors, friends, or loved ones. He quotes a hadith emphasizing the importance of good social relationships. Morality thus has not only a vertical dimension (relationship with Allah) but also a horizontal dimension (relationship with fellow creatures). It can even be said that vertical morality will be tested through horizontal morality; someone who claims to love Allah but does not do good to Allah's creatures is a liar. As stated in the hadith: "None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself."

The scope of moral education is not limited to family and school environments but extends to national and international political conditions. Miskawaih views religion and the state as two siblings that complement each other. The government has an obligation to create political conditions conducive to the growth of noble character. Without support from just politics, moral education will face structural obstacles that are difficult to overcome. How can honesty be taught to children in a society where corruption runs rampant and corruptors are actually honored? How can justice values be instilled in a systematically unjust system? Therefore, moral education reform must go hand in hand with political reform.

This shows that Miskawaih has a holistic view of education, not reducing it to a merely technical-instrumental process but placing it in a broader socio-political context. Moral education is thus not only the responsibility of individuals or educational institutions but a collective project involving all components of society. Family, school, community, media, and the state all have roles in creating an environment conducive to the growth of noble character. The failure of one component will affect the effectiveness of other components. Miskawaih keenly observed that moral education efforts at the individual and family levels would be futile if socio-political structures do not support them, just as good seeds will not grow in barren soil.

Comparison with Other Muslim Thinkers

To understand Miskawaih's position in the tradition of Islamic ethical thought, it is important to compare him with other Muslim thinkers, especially al-Ghazali who also wrote extensively on morality. Although both adopt the same basic framework—namely the tripartite soul structure and the middle way doctrine—there are significant differences in their approaches and emphases. Miskawaih emphasizes the rational and philosophical dimension more, while al-Ghazali emphasizes the spiritual and mystical dimension more. Miskawaih is optimistic about human capacity to achieve moral virtues through education and rational training, while al-Ghazali is more pessimistic and emphasizes the importance of divine grace (*taufiq*) in moral transformation.

Regarding educational methods, Miskawaih is more systematic and practical, providing concrete guidance on how to educate morality according to children's developmental stages. Al-Ghazali, although also providing practical guidance in *Ihya Ulum al-Din*, emphasizes spiritual aspects more such as *muraqabah* (introspection), *mujahadah* (struggle against the self), and *dhikr* (remembering Allah). For al-Ghazali, moral transformation is the result of spiritual transformation; a person must first improve their relationship with Allah before being able to improve their character. Miskawaih does not ignore the spiritual dimension, but he has more confidence in the capacity of reason and systematic education in forming character.

Another difference lies in their views on the relationship between knowledge and morality. Miskawaih, following the Socratic tradition, tends to believe that knowledge of the good will drive a person to do good. Although he acknowledges that knowledge alone is not enough without habituation, knowledge remains an important foundation. Al-Ghazali is more skeptical of this claim. He observes that many scholars who master religious knowledge are not morally good. For al-Ghazali, beneficial knowledge is knowledge accompanied by practice and producing *khauf* (fear) of Allah. Knowledge without practice is like a tree without fruit, only providing shade but not providing substantial benefit.

4. CONCLUSION

Ibn Miskawaih's concept of moral education in *Tahdzib al-Akhlaq* offers a comprehensive and relevant philosophical framework for addressing the contemporary moral crisis. His thought is based on harmonious integration between Greek philosophical tradition and Islamic teachings, producing a unique synthesis that avoids dichotomy between reason and revelation, individual and society, as well as material and spiritual dimensions. Morality is defined as a state of the soul that drives spontaneous actions, which can be changed through systematic education and habituation, rejecting determinism that views morality as something fixed and unchangeable. Miskawaih's optimistic view of education's capacity to transform human character provides a theoretical foundation for character-building efforts in contemporary Islamic education contexts.

Four cardinal virtues—wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice—become the pillars of noble character sourced from the harmonization of three soul powers: rational, *syahwaniyyah*, and *ghadhabiiyyah*. The principle of the middle way (*al-washath*) as an ethical methodology emphasizes that every virtue lies between two reprehensible extremes, with reason and *shari'ah* as objective measures considering the particularity of concrete situations. The proposed educational methods include the natural method suited to fitrah development and children's psychological stages, habituation as key to character formation through systematic repetition, *Riyadhah* for soul disease therapy with systematic and rational approaches, and exemplary conduct through association with righteous people who demonstrate moral values in daily life practice. The combination of these four methods creates a holistic and comprehensive moral education system.

The highest goal of education is true happiness (*al-sa'adah*) which encompasses individual perfection and social contribution, achieved through cooperation and solidarity in a just society. The social dimension of moral education is greatly emphasized by Miskawaih, who views that individual moral reform must go hand in hand with socio-political structural reform. Moral education cannot

succeed in a social vacuum but requires support from family, school, community, and the state. This holistic view demonstrates the depth of Miskawaih's thought, which does not reduce moral education to merely an individual project but understands it as a collective project involving all components of society.

The theoretical implication of this research is the need to reconstruct the Islamic education paradigm that integrates cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions in a holistic framework that is not dichotomous. Moral education must be designed based on a deep understanding of human soul structure and its developmental stages, combining rational-philosophical and normative-religious approaches. This integration is important to avoid two extremes: secularism that separates education from religious values, and fundamentalism that rejects the use of reason and modern science in education.

Practically, implementing Miskawaih's concept demands transformation of the education system from materialistic-intellectualistic orientation toward character education, emphasizing habituation, exemplary conduct, and creating a conducive environment involving family, school, community, and the state. Educational curriculum must be designed not only to develop cognitive abilities but also to form character through habituation of moral values in daily life. Teachers must be prepared not only as instructors who master subject matter but also as character educators who become living examples for their students. Educational evaluation must include not only cognitive aspects but also affective and psychomotor aspects, measuring the extent to which learners have internalized moral values in their personalities.

Further research is needed to explore the operationalization of Miskawaih's philosophical concepts in contemporary education contexts, including developing curricula based on moral virtues, learning methods that integrate habituation and critical reflection, and evaluation instruments capable of measuring character transformation validly and reliably. Comparative studies with character education systems in other countries, both based on Islamic and non-Islamic values, can provide insights into best practices that can be adapted to the Indonesian context. Empirical research is also needed to test the effectiveness of various moral education methods in changing learner behavior, so that character education is not merely philosophical discourse but also empirical practice with measurable impacts. Thus, Miskawaih's intellectual legacy can continue to live and make real contributions to solving the moral crisis afflicting contemporary education.

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