

The Equilibration of the Self and the Sense of Sublation: Spirituality in Thought, Music, and Meditation

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Spirituality is as much a part of everyday experiences, expressed in music, art, or sport, as it is a part of meditative and other mystical states of consciousness. Three loci of development are proposed, relating to representational, presentational, and mystical lines: all of these lines converge on cognitions of spiritual reality, expressed through the mediums of the lines in question. A graded horizontal and vertical progression in the ensemble of lines characterises spiritual presence as both the highest expression of any line and as specific lines of development themselves. Well-confirmed neo-Piagetian dynamics are found to explain many aspects of spiritual development as well as conventional psychological development. Sublation is the atemporal condition of spiritual presence on which all lines converge in their highest forms, which developmental psychology approaches, slightly paradoxically, through the temporalised progression of ontogeny.

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The “sense of sublation” is a resplendent, magisterial, and atemporal appreciation of the fullness of life, which emerges as human potential blooms: it can be glimpsed as the higher unfolding of all human capacities (including thought, sport, and music), and also encompasses entire capacities in their own right which have been developed most fully by the mystics (including meditation). Life is experienced as opening outwards into a seemingly infinite horizon in which finitude appears to have been transcended. The resultant affect is one of happiness (even ecstasy), kindness, and something like wonder. Mystical philosophers have called this enlightenment, and religious teachers, including Christ, have said that it is a glimpse of the fullness of an eternal life to come (c.f. Hunt, 2012). Yet if this condition is really timeless it cannot be ours to find in the future alone but must also be available to us now: individuals discover this initially in their greatest moments and as they share in the greatest moments

of others, and then as an increasingly continuous sense of buoyancy and insight which accompanies both inspirational and mundane aspects of life.

The “equilibration of the self” is the mutual coalescence of thought and the world through the development of cognition across ontogeny. It has been shown in Piaget’s genetic epistemology that the self “equilibrates” (Piaget’s term) to physical reality, as demonstrated through increasing mastery of cognitive tasks. Equilibration is the changing relationship between components or “lines” (term explained below) within the individual which influences both the development of the individual, and the emergence of transpersonal potentials (see Dale, 2011).

The transpersonal version of Piaget’s ideas outlined in this article may have been closer to Piaget’s original vision than the account of development up to formal operations to which his work is simplified in psychology text books. Much of Piaget’s early work was concerned with the pursuit of “value,” which he considered to be the goal of the religious life. A great deal of research in psychology can be considered a contribution to the process of equilibration of the individual to spiritual reality, although the relevance of psychological research to a spiritual context might only be obvious to those who have attained a degree of equilibration to spiritual reality which is above average in the general population whom psychologists study. In discussing these dynamics more fully it is useful to identify representational, presentational, and mystical loci.

Representational, Presentational, and Mystical Loci

The “lines” of development within the human being can be placed into three groups, or loci, which can be named representational, presentational, and mystical. (The term “line,” which may appear strange to those unfamiliar with its usage in psychology, is used to represent any developmental capacity. The concept originates in nineteenth century faculty psychology, and was most famously developed through the related notions of modules, domains, or frames, in the work of Fodor [1983] and Gardner [1983], and then in neo-Piagetian psychology.) The *representational* loci deal with aspects of cognition in which meaning is conveyed through computational symbols. Examples include lines dealing with number, weight, and spatial processing, among others (see Case, 1992). The *presentational* loci deal with aspects of cognition in which meaning is conveyed through absorption in mediums of everyday expression. Examples include all forms of the arts, including music, poetry, and drama (see Shanon, 2008). The *mystical* loci deal with spiritually related altered states of consciousness which do not usually arise in ordinary life at all, like the different techniques of meditation.

If the loci are arranged from left to right, with the representational lines on the left, the presentational lines in the centre, and the mystical lines on the right, then a graded progression of spiritual awareness exists from both top to

bottom and from left to right, such that the most intense spiritual presence exists towards the top and towards the right (see Figure 1). The bottom left of the ensemble will be the least likely to produce a feeling of spiritual presence in the individual, and the top right will be the most likely. Hence, the representational lines only find spiritual expression at the very highest levels. The presentational lines find spiritual expression more easily, but still have to be developed to a reasonable degree. The mystical lines induce a sense of spiritual presence very quickly, though they can still intensify through continued vertical development.

Any line of development finds a spiritual expression in its higher forms. The development of the representational lines in very different cultural settings produces recognisably similar cognitions. In the modern West, the development of representational thought in mathematics and physics has led to the study of the interconnected structures of complex systems theory, to a recognition of the possibility of multiple realities, to an awareness of the speeding up and slowing down of time in different situations captured in the “twin paradox,” to an acknowledgement of the shifting of observer/observed roles, and to linkage or “entanglement” of objects arbitrarily far apart in space (Laughlin and Throop,

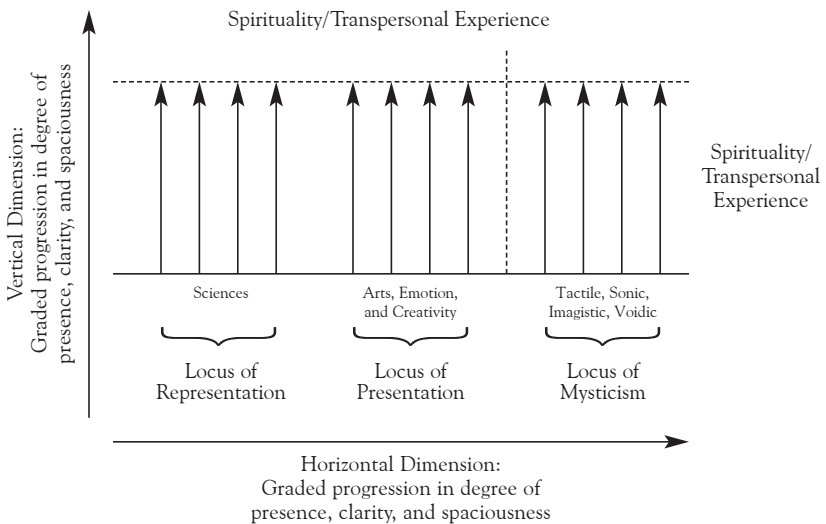


Figure 1: Spirituality is both the higher levels of any developmental line, and specific developmental lines themselves.

2001, 2003; c.f. Hunt, 1995). Physicists do not fully understand these phenomena, much less most psychologists, but recognisable parallels between the representational structures which physics describes and ancient cosmologies are clearly evident. The same structures of representational cognition provide the blueprint for all investigations of cosmology, whether those investigations take place in the modern West and take the data of modern cosmology as their content, or in non-Western indigenous settings and take the phenomenologies of shamanism as their content. There is even some evidence that the contemplation of representational cognition itself can open out into the spacious presence of spiritual consciousness: in the cult of Pythagoras, and the academies of Plato and Hypatia, the contemplation of geometrical axioms was practised as a route to mystical cognitions of the “forms” (Dzielska, 1995).

The presentational lines open out into spiritual presence more frequently and in more obvious manner. The appreciation of music or of poetry can result in an almost meditative or trance-like absorption into the medium of presentation: a musical concert can convey a spiritual or transcendent feeling (Hunt, 1995). This spiritual feeling extends to the performer as well; the sitar musician Ravi Shankar described becoming so immersed in his music that the setting of the concert would be completely forgotten (Shankar, 1997). In theory any form of art, including painting, sculpture, architecture, literature, poetry, or theatrical performance, can potentially induce this kind of reaction.¹ Similarly in sport, descriptions of sporting performances or persons as “divine” in the media, though perhaps overused, reveal the potential of this activity to convey a sense of transcendence to the observer, as well as at times the sports person themselves.²

The perception of spiritual presence through the presentational lines is more common than through the representational lines; for extraordinary individuals like Pythagoras, Plato, or Hypatia, such a perception of spiritual presence through the development of representational cognition is possible, but most people do not experience an enhanced spiritual awareness whilst trying to solve mathe-

¹The appreciation of “natural art” (like landscapes) can produce a similar spiritual feeling. In previous ages, the act of hunting was regarded as sacred, and may have induced a similar “ecstasis” or absorption in the moment, and in the flow of life. Dance is used in ancient cultures and modern subcultures to this effect. Indeed absorption in many traditional activities, like weaving and other crafts, may well have helped to root these cultures in the heightened sense of spiritual awareness they often seem to have activated (Eliade and Couliano, 1991). Music was used in these cultures to raise spiritual presence for ritual purposes, but the natural rhythms of indigenous life-ways may well have continued this immersion in presentational materials through more mundane activities as well.

²The English cricketer Geoffrey Boycott (2009) describes an experience, “in the millisecond it took for the ball to leave Chappell’s hand, I knew the shot I’d play to it; I knew where the ball was going; I knew it would bring up my century. I saw the delivery in striking clarity, almost in High Definition. And I played it as though I was standing outside myself; actually watching myself get into position for the on-drive.” See also Taylor (2002).

matical problems. Deriving a spiritual feeling from presentational experience is much more common, but a high level of development in the line in question is still necessary: a beginner playing an instrument will not induce a spiritual presence in the audience; a professional musician or even an accomplished amateur might induce such a presence. Hence there is a graded increase in the likelihood and ease with which spiritual presence is accessed from the representational lines to the presentational lines.

The mystical lines exist furthest to the right of all of the loci, and therefore most easily and obviously produce a spiritual presence. For a presentational line to reach spiritual heights, years of development are needed; it usually takes at least ten years to master a domain of development (music, literary, etc.) [Piirto, 2004]. Developing such lines to the degree that they can produce a sense of transcendence in others takes time. But, as individuals' statements testify, anyone can derive a sense of spiritual presence through either a few days spent on an intensive meditative retreat, or even more rapidly through the use of indigenous entheogenic preparations like the ayahuasca brew. The mystical lines themselves can still be developed through years of practice and so the purest and most intense spiritual presence is to be found at the highest vertical extent of the mystical lines, and hence the most fertile spiritual ground is the top right-hand corner of the ensemble that has been described; but even a small degree of development of the mystical lines induces a spiritual sensation, as the whole of the right-hand side of the ensemble is directly rooted in potent spiritual currents.

The Neo-Piagetian Dynamics of the Mystical Lines

Neo-Piagetian research has shown that the representational lines unfold through Piaget's stages of development at independent rates. The mystical lines also show evidence of a neo-Piagetian styled dynamic; different lines of meditative development progress through Patanjali's stages of samyoga at different rates, as proposed in Dale (2011).

Lines of meditative development take the form of either contents or techniques, and correspond to the contents and tasks of neo-Piagetian psychology. The contents of introverted spirituality are best broken down into the sensory modalities, and specific Yogas exist which develop each of these sensory modalities. A *tactile* line relates to meditations which develop awareness of the body, including the practices which work with the internal channels and areas of muscular tension (for example Hindu chakra meditations). An *imagistic* line relates to meditations which develop internal imagery (for example the cultivation of light in Christian Hesychasm). A *sonic* line exists which is developed in the Yogas of mantric recitation and the internal intonation of syllables (for example the Hindu shabda Yoga), and a *voidic* line exists which it is claimed

taps into pure consciousness, that is, consciousness stripped of any complex representation (for example, in the Sunyavada school of Buddhism).³

The development of each line unfolds relatively independently of the others as it must be constructed separately on a neurobiological level. (See Cahn and Polich [2006] for some examples of brain areas involved in different types of meditation.) These different contents or modalities are utilised in different techniques. For example, the Sant Mat school often combines imagistic and sonic lines into the surat shabda Yoga of light and sound. But each technique of meditation can be considered a line of development itself, and again these develop relatively independently (an expert-level grounding in Zen meditation won't automatically transfer to a mastery of Tantra, which involves very different procedures.) Much as musical content can be developed through the tasks of playing either the guitar or the flute, so each meditative content can be developed through multiple specific techniques.

There is evidence that shared, broad stages of meditative development exist. Often, three such stages are identified which correspond to Patanjali's stages of *dharana*, *dhyana*, and *samadhi*. The first two stages have been confirmed in laboratory studies of meditators across traditions, and correspond to synchronised alpha waves and synchronised theta waves respectively, while the neural correlates of *samadhi* show variation between different groups and different forms of measurement (Cahn and Polich, 2006; West, 1980). The stages of *samyoga* refer to different stages of mergence with the object of meditation; they are often experienced as distinct transitions by the meditator (see Vivekananda, 1901; Washburn, 1995). Different contents or techniques develop through these stages independently, as the different lines of meditation have to be built independently through neurological adaptations.

Many of the issues debated in comparative religion and transpersonal psychology are clarified when considered from a neo-Piagetian perspective. A neo-Piagetian understanding of the phenomenologies of different spiritual cultures would definitely not predict the universal stages suggested in analyses of spiritual phylogeny, as did Wilber (1982). Instead, different contents and different tasks would see a disparate development between different cultures (and indeed between different individuals) in line with the degree with which a particular spiritual content or task was practised. In neo-Piagetian theory, factors which lead to particularly large differences between the development of different lines include a high degree of exposure to the content or task in question, a high degree of motivation to develop the content or task, and a rich knowledge

³The senses of taste and smell are not developed as Yogas as frequently, perhaps because they are the least prominent senses in humans, but there are some attempts to create Yogas of taste and smell in Vajrayana Buddhism (Gyatso, 1991). However, in this article the four lines identified in the main text provide the focus.

base (Case, 1992; Feldman, 1994). These factors are likely to be in place in spiritual communities like monasteries and ashrams where motivation and knowledge base in students will be high, and where the exposure to certain contents or techniques rather than others is likely to be acute — for it is often the case that only the techniques and contents considered relevant by the tradition are encouraged, or even allowed, to be practised. In lay communities of meditators where techniques are more likely to be mixed, or chopped and changed, the degree of independence in the development of different mystical lines will be less pronounced.

The question of whether or not stages apply to spiritual development appears to depend on the nature of the learning environment. A large amount of evidence shows that performance on learning tasks amongst school children progresses continuously rather than in stage-like or discrete jumps in performance level in ordinary class-room environments. In optimal learning conditions on the other hand (for example, conditions in which one-to-one tuition is available), new performance levels are achieved in stage-like jumps (Fischer, Kenny, and Pipp, 1990). If neo-Piagetian dynamics extend to meditative lines then researchers can expect to find stage-like development in the practice of meditation in the optimal learning conditions of monastic or ashramic settings where one-to-one support is available on a daily basis, while in communities of lay meditators where such support is not often available, development will usually be much more continuous (as well as slower overall). Indeed this continuous rather than discrete development in communities of lay meditators is what is reported in anecdotal feedback from students (see Rothberg, 1996), who claim to experience progress over time but do not feel that the stage-like nature of development described in the traditional meditative compendiums composed in monasteries is evident in their own growth.

Although three stages of meditation are commonly reported across both Eastern cultures (from which Patanjali's *samyoga* stages derived) and Western cultures (where they make up the *scala perfectionis*), as well as in Lewis-Williams and Pearce's (2005) analysis of the progression of trance in Kung bush people, and although three stages have been confirmed through corresponding changes in EEG synchrony in laboratory studies, some techniques and traditions identify a different number of stages. Although four main stages dominate neo-Piagetian frameworks (sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational), Piaget himself, as well as more recent theorists, acknowledged that many additional substages were involved and that substages differ from one task to another. Moreover, the substages often *had* to differ as different physical procedures were needed to complete tasks on a balance beam from tasks on a rope pulley, for example (see Inhelder and Piaget, 1958). A direct analogy arises between different cognitive tasks and the performance of different meditative techniques. The more elaborate meditative techniques like Tantra or the visualisation meditations given in the *Gheranda Samhita*, are clearly very

different tasks compared to techniques like Zen and Vipassana, which involve a much simpler focus on the breath or the body. It is no surprise then, that different numbers of stages are mentioned in different meditative traditions. Three main stages exist across many meditative techniques, but different technique specific sub-stages also exist, which can make certain compendiums of meditative development appear more detailed.

Interrelations of the Lines

The mystical lines can play an active role in the development of other lines in the self. There is evidence that the presentational lines are initially influenced by the development of representational cognition, and then may fall under the influence of the mystical lines (in those who choose to activate the mystical lines). For example, musical development passes through Piaget's stages up to a formal operational level; in the case of the guitar, the instrument must be learned physically, so the correct way to pluck the strings must be learned (sensorimotor level), then set pieces are learned like scales (concrete operational level), and then the same general riffs, refrains, and turnabouts are applied as generalised or abstract blue prints in a variety of improvised situations (formal operational level). Certain musicians, having developed to this level, will then cite mystical experience, including meditation, as an influence which inspires the creation of more and more impressive pieces of music. Their music will be heightened as a result of their spirituality, which their music conveys (c.f. Shankar, 1997).

Similarly, moral development initially falls under the influence of representational cognition, but its development can be raised to post-conventional levels through the influence of mysticism. In Kohlberg's model, the concrete operational morality of the child, in which loyalties are extended to kin and kind, who share concrete surface features (same family, same school, same neighbourhood, etc.), progresses to a formal operational level in which general principles of equality of rights and values are extended to increasingly abstract groups (all human beings, all human and animal beings, etc.; see Colby, Kohlberg, Abrahami, and Gibbs, 2011). The highest levels of moral development can be conceived of intellectually at a formal operational age (12–16 years), and so, as Kohlberg stressed, the development of morality follows the development of abstract logico-mathematical cognition.

But for Kohlberg the highest stages of moral development were not signified by the representational ability to answer questions on moral judgement tests alone, but by putting that understanding into practice in terms of actual actions in real life situations. In Western mystical traditions, the state of *union*, which involves behaviors similar to Kohlberg's proposed seventh stage of moral development, is induced through years of dedicated mystical prayer, in which

the egoc personality is stripped away so that the essence of personhood which remains acts entirely in accord with the universal ethic, or in traditional terms with the “will of God.” As Hollenback (1996, pp. 551–552) describes, in the state of union the individual will “become so heedless of his own welfare that he instinctively conforms his actions and his intentions exclusively to God, just as if God’s will were his own.” Such a state of mind appears to capture what is intended by the integrative unity of Kohlberg’s highest stage. The highest stage of moral development appears to be a synesthetic fusion of thought and feeling, in which the individual actually acts upon his or her moral insights (Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and Nelson Mandela are the usual modern examples).⁴ Such a state, it seems, can be induced through the synesthetic fusion experienced in meditative mystical prayer, though this activity is not essential in inducing the highest levels of moral development.

The development of ego is also initially closely related to the development of representational cognition (Erikson, 1982; Loevinger, 1976), but higher soft stages of ego development exist, and research has shown that meditation can accelerate the ego development of students into post-conventional levels (Alexander et al., 1990; Radhi, 2002). Meditation (and mindfulness) are also known to be effective in “unfreezing” the development of disadvantaged populations, like prisoners, who had not previously reached conventional levels of moral development, as well as raising affect (Biegel, Brown, Shapiro, and Schubert, 2009; Himelstein, 2011; Khurana and Dhar, 2000; Orme–Johnson and Moore, 2003).

The emerging picture is that many of the presentational lines are initially influenced by representational cognition, but to develop the presentational lines to their peak, the influence of the mystical lines can be useful. The mystical lines themselves provide the metaphor of openness and humanistic expansiveness to which the moral line appears to equilibrate (c.f. Hunt, 1995); the absorptions of meditation produce a sensation of beauty, or of magnificence, which musical and other creative endeavours aspire to replicate.⁵

Spiritual Reality and Sublation

In Piaget’s genetic epistemology, the development of representational cognition converges on physical reality. This insight — voluminously confirmed empirically

⁴Kohlberg eventually abandoned the study of the seventh stage of moral development as actual examples of such individuals were too difficult to find, but the highest stage identified by Fowler (1981) has similar characteristics, and also seems to come close to the Western mystical state of union.

⁵Spirituality is a structural change unfolding across every line in the self. A powerful spiritual equilibrium influences all lines, but can be triggered by developments in any line. Any line of development can produce the necessary perturbation to throw ontogeny down a transpersonal trajectory which finds expression in *every* line (see Dale, 2011).

— can be developed and extended to provide insight into the nature of spiritual development.

Spiritual development converges on spiritual reality; that is, every line of development draws towards spiritual reality and therefore expresses the spiritual in its highest forms. This is not to suggest that there is a pre-given or metaphysical state of “nirvana” which exists in unchanging manner independently of the perception of human individuals, for this has been debunked, firstly by Kant, and then by Piaget himself who set the co-constructed relationship between subject and object on a developmental footing (Von Glaserfeld, 1979). Instead, the physical world and the subject mutually coalesce; the testing of the world by the individual (the Piagetian process of “reality testing”) changes the internal structures of the subject through the processes of assimilation, accommodation, and equilibration, whilst changes in those internal structures simultaneously alter the appearance of the external world. Development proceeds in this constructive and circular interaction (Piaget, 1972).

Once it is admitted that every line of development can come to a spiritual fruition, the nature of physical reality and spiritual reality conflates, for it becomes clear that what was previously considered physical and separate from the spiritual is really the same as the spiritual. In the realisation of “subject permanence,” an equilibration of the self occurring after several years or decades of dedicated meditation which has been confirmed in longitudinal studies of meditation students, the difference between the subject and object is removed, and the experience of a separate external physical world melts away into the unified continuum of the “Self” (see Alexander et al. [1990] for more information). A difference between the physical and spiritual only seems obvious in certain forms of equilibrium, or in certain phases of human development. The nature of physical reality itself and the difference between spiritual and physical reality depend on the developmental equilibrium of the individual. Every aspect of ontogeny can be viewed as a convergence on spiritual reality, and the highest flowering of every developmental line as an expression of spiritual value. What is more, this view of development is more in line with the theoretical basis of much twentieth century psychology than might commonly be realised; Piaget himself had set out to show something similar in the early part of his career.

If he had written in the twentieth-first century, Piaget would probably have been considered a psychologist with transpersonal interests. Piaget certainly showed an interest in religion. For Piaget (1916, 1918, 1928, 1929, 1930), the individual converged on a sense of spiritual value described in his theory of “immanentism.” Though the individual could never completely reach spiritual reality, the individual could equilibrate more closely to spiritual reality, in a manner reminiscent of Hegel’s work. Spiritual value was experienced as a sense of sublime appreciation and benevolence, rather like Plato’s “Good” and did

not indicate a belief in the God of the conventional Catholic theology of his up-bringing. God was conceived in a Bergsonian sense and identified with the evolutionary progression of life (Bergson, 1907/1944). Much as representational cognition could equilibrate ever more closely to physical reality, so the experience of value which constituted intuition of the Absolute could constantly be refined.⁶ That Piaget cut down his focus on these themes later in his career may have been due to a lack of a developed transpersonal paradigm. At any rate, Piaget maintained some interest in these topics to the end of his career (see Piaget, 1983) as well as in his informal conversations with Bringuier (1980), though he failed to substantiate this interest as competently as his studies in representational cognition.

From the perspective of developmental psychology, subject permanence presents a paradox. Mystics from many different cultures describe a sense of timelessness. Yet subject permanence, or related terms like Fowler's (1981) sixth stage of faith, or the non-dual terminology popular in transpersonal psychology, is increasingly recognised as an equilibrium which can be achieved as a part of a developmental process. Sublation is the philosophical term used by Hegel (1807/2005) to refer to the act of moving beyond a previous level or form whilst simultaneously maintaining that previous form in its entirety; it is also commonly used in translations of Madhyamaka philosophy like Nagarjuna's *Mulamadhyamakakarika* (see Garfield, 1995). The heights of spiritual presence reveal an atemporal cognition, which any line of development can reach; this realisation sublates the developmental process of each and every line once it is achieved. The individuals in the state of subject permanence are simultaneously aware of the passage of conventional time and can interact with the world, but at the same time it is clear to them that the stream of conventional time is subsumed within an unchanging and timeless backdrop with which the greater part of themselves now identifies. This is the paradoxical nature of the state of sublation, which was recognised in many systems of ancient philosophy, and which is emerging again as scientific psychology increasingly arrives at the same insights as the mystical philosophers through the study of the temporalised aspect of reality which constitutes ontogeny.

Average human equilibrations to reality do not usually appear spiritual, particularly in the first half of life, and there is a tendency for individuals to think of the spiritual as something "otherworldly," obscure, or even delusional. But a

⁶The counter-intuitive developments in physics like the curvature of space-time have shown just how far the nature of physical reality can depart from common sense expectations (see Piaget and Garcia, 1983). Moreover, the curvature of space-time which ensures that travel in any direction will eventually lead back to a central point, reveals a similar cognition of eternity to that which is revealed of consciousness in meditative samadhi: both representational and mystical lines produce knowledge of the same reality, which takes on a spiritual or infinite quality when those lines undergo a certain degree of development.

convergence on spiritual reality follows from the assumptions of genetic epistemology which have been very well confirmed empirically in the research of Piaget and neo-Piagetians. Psychological data are data on spiritual development; one cannot, at any point, either find, or leave the spiritual path, for nothing exists outside of that path.⁷

Conclusion

Every developmental line progresses towards and reflects spiritual reality, though some lines of development reflect spiritual value more readily and obviously than others. The lines of development themselves interact as advances in one line radiate around the entire structure of the self. The lower developments of the lines are simply less accurate equilibrations to spiritual reality; a low level of ability in any line is less obviously spiritual than a higher level of ability, as described in relation to representational, presentational, and mystical loci. Any other definition of spirituality encounters the problem of defining the difference between the spiritual and the nonspiritual which, simple as it might sound, might be impossible: in the final analysis, if spirituality involves notions of infinity and eternity, then no aspect of life can stand outside of the spiritual vista, for infinity and eternity must contain all.

Life can be thought of as a celebration of spirituality — a showcase in which every line of development exhibits some aspect of equilibration to spiritual reality at some level. This sentiment, which sounds New Age (and therefore perhaps suspect) when first encountered, is actually very close to the aims of perhaps the most influential theorist and researcher in psychology's history: Piaget. The sentiment can be explored through analogies with genetic epistemology, a science which engages all of the intricacies of the relationship between subject and object, and between rationalism and empiricism, which have been debated for 2000 years, and which the great modern philosophers like Descartes, Hume, Locke, Kant, and Hegel struggled to come to terms with. Piaget's own answer to these questions, expressed in his constructive theories of development and evolution, and approached through the mutual, dynamic coalescence of the subject and object into an ever-deepening future — see Flavell (1963) and Müller, Carpendale, and Smith (2009) for summaries of Piaget's work — is compatible with the theory of spiritual development outlined. The theory outlined may even contain the potential to illumine some of the blind spots which Piaget's own

⁷This equilibration to spiritual reality is not mediated through higher developments in the hard stages of representational cognition, but as a soft stage (or equilibrium) which can come into being at any time in ontogeny, as a result of nonlinear phase transitions in the complex system of the organism. As a systems based equilibrium, rather than as a representational hard stage, children and adolescents can occasionally attain profound awareness of spiritual presence; for more on this systems view of transpersonal development see Dale (2011).

theory set out to address but could not complete, benefiting as it does from several further decades of research and theorising on transpersonal issues.

Spirituality is not only found in the mystical lines, it is found in all human experience. Spirituality is to develop our own abilities to the greatest degree, which is to say, to live spiritually is to live any and all aspects of life as well as we can.

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