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SELF-AWARENESS, SELF-ESTEEM, AND RESPECT FOR OTHERS
The Genetic Perspective
(In Memoriam Jean Piaget, 1896-1980)

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> Egocentrism (...) is the undifferentiated state prior to multiple perspectives, whereas objectivity implies both differentiation and coordination of the points of view.[1] Egocentrism means simultaneously lack of self-awareness and lack of objectivity.[2]

Abstract: The image of myself, the way how I view others and how they view me, profoundly influence each other. Their interaction is an essential basis for mutual respect. I'll investigate their genesis from the perspective of Developmental Psychology, because it gives an overview over the intellectual and emotional prerequisites for social understanding and an insight into the underlying development principles. The analysis is based on the work of Jean Piaget, a 20th century giant in Developmental Psychology. Special emphasis is given to his considerations on *egocentrism* and its dissolution – *decentration.* It will be shown how and why between birth and adulthood the images of self and others undergo profound changes. What initially was a "me" becomes a person and then a personality.

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[1]Jean Piaget and Bärbel Inhelder, *De la logique de l'enfant à la logique de l'adolescent*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1955, 345. All citations from French or German sources have been translated by myself. Additions in citations are marked by square brackets [ ].

[2]Jean Piaget, *La construction du réel chez l'enfant*, Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé 1937, Introduction.

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1. Introduction: Development as a Decentration Process

The newborn baby doesn't know anything about itself. Piaget associated this lack of self-awareness with "adualism" (a concept he adopted from Baldwin): The baby is unconscious of its being different from others, but also from its non-living environment. Babies are social beings from birth, yet they don't know anything about social life, since they even lack awareness of the most basic relations. A baby acts sometimes as if it felt almighty and sometimes as if it were controlled from outside. So, soon after birth, it begins to scream when another baby screams next to it.[3] The screaming concert is a collective happening, so to speak, lacking difference between "me" and "you".

Piaget calls "egocentric" an attitude marked by lacking self-consciousness in which nevertheless the action is directed towards oneself. The genesis of self-consciousness occurs through a decentration process. Three phases merit special consideration:

i. The child becomes aware of the difference between successive views on something and starts to explore them. Yet, as long as he doesn't remember the previous views he mingles them. Often children switch between their own and another's viewpoints without clearly distinguishing them. Egocentrism is weakening but not yet overcome.

ii. The child distinguishes the views and succeeds in relating two (sometimes more) different views. He succeeds in coordinating them without causing confusion, but doesn't coordinate the viewpoints or perspectives themselves.

iii. He succeeds in coordinating viewpoints by reflecting on them from an outside stand. This is the mark of a level transition. Piaget considered this stage as an "equilibration"

[3]Martin L. Hoffman, *Empathy and Moral Development: Implication for Caring and Justice*, Cambridge: University Press 2000, 64 ff.

process.[4] Coordination of views and then viewpoints is crucial for social interaction, but also for learning processes generally.

It is worthwhile to distinguish between the following situations. First, an object is viewed or referred to simultaneously by two people from different perspectives. An example is so called *joint attention* (which I'll explain later). Second, a person looks at an object successively from different perspectives. An example is a baby's exploring an interesting tangible object. In both cases the views are coordinated, but not the viewpoints (perspectives). Third: A geographic map is elaborated on the basis of photographs from different viewpoints. Here the viewpoints themselves must be coordinated, and this is only possible through a view (or reflection) from outside, representing, so to speak, a "higher" level.

Decentration is a "*leitmotiv*" in Piaget's work. Yet, he did not clearly distinguish between different decentration types. He started studying them when he analyzed children's ways of thinking, reasoning, and world view. Only when in 1952-54, after the publication of twenty books, he gave lectures at *Sorbonne University* on the relation between cognitive and affective intelligence, he applied his knowledge about decentration processes to social understanding. On this occasion, he mentioned that self-awareness depends (to a large part) on the awareness of other persons. Yet, it was a fleeting mention, based on Baldwin's thesis "that consciousness of the self makes a quite tardy appearance and is constructed correlatively, not with consciousness of objects, but with consciousness of other people which comes later."[5] Piaget was reluctant to publish these Lectures, and his own studies on the topic remained fragmentary. Mostly he ascribed the rise of self-

[4]Jean Piaget, *L'équilibration des structures cognitives*. Études d'épistemologie génétique XXXIII, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France 1975.

[5]Jean Piaget, *Intelligence and Affectivity: Their Relationship During Child Development*, Palo Alto: Annual Reviews Inc., 1981, 8.

awareness to reflection processes which guide the child's autonomous activity.

When a baby crawls through a room and explores how its views on the different pieces of furniture change, it tackles with spatial perspectives. When it explores different views and aspects of a doll, it deals with the views on a single object. When an infant studies varying arrangements of a dozen marbles, he explores different configurations of the same marble set. In social interaction, decentration processes occur, when people try to coordinate their 'positions', beliefs, or interests. In this case *empathy* is crucial, whereas in the former cases decentration doesn't involve empathy.

In his Sorbonne Lectures, Piaget emphasized that intelligence has two sides, an intellectual and an affective, but in a simplifying way he assumed that affects served uniquely as impulses for human activity, whereas intelligence gives it its structure.[6] He did not mention that emotions entail cognitive structures too, and thus resemble spontaneous, implicit propositional judgments. Fear, for instance, means: *there is something dangerous!* Piaget's main interest was explaining the genesis of logical and mathematical thinking. The rise of self-consciousness remained a rather marginal research topic, and Piaget paid little attention to emotions and none to empathy.

To understand how decentration promotes self-awareness, we have to distinguish between coordinating *views* or *aspects* and *perspectives*. Self awareness has its origin in the latter. A motive to coordinate viewpoints arises when for resolving a problem a child reflects on his own actions and action coordinations. Self-consciousness, says Piaget, is never completely reached, since we never enter into the very centre of our act regulations.[7]

For the given reasons an overview on how self-awareness, self-esteem, awareness of others, and respect for others develop, can hardly be given only on the basis of Piaget's own

[6]Piaget, *Intelligence and Affectivity, 7.*

[7]Jean Piaget, *The naissance de l'intelligence chez l'enfant*, Neuchâtel : delachaux et Niestlé 1936, 133; Piaget, *L'équlibration*, 28.

research. I'll therefore also call upon other researcher's findings, most of them published after Piaget's death, and interpret them according to Piaget's stage theory which I explain in the following section.

2. Piaget's Stage Theory

Piaget postulated four levels of development: the *sensori-motor* (0-1½ years), the *preoperative* (1½-7/8 years), the *concrete operations'* (7/8-12/15 years) and the *formal operations'* level (from 12/16 years onwards). According to the aforementioned decentration phases, each level can be divided into three stages:

> (a) a phase of strict egocentrism, in which the child does not consider different perspectives or relations whatsoever; (b) a second phase of egocentrism in the broader sense, which implies both a distinction between perspectives and a consideration of relations, yet without a coordination of perspectives or relations, and (c) a third phase of complete decentration that is marked by the coordination of perspectives.[8]

To coordinate different viewpoints (perspectives), the subject must reflect them from outside. The ability to take an external stand marks a transition to a new cognitive level. The subject is now aware of his own viewpoint and by this indirectly of himself. Piaget (and before him Hegel!) called this a "reversal in consciousness".[9]

This stage sequence is repeated at each level. At its end the subject reaches a new layer of cognitive activity which marks a vertical difference. First, this layer is not clearly elaborated and remains unconscious, causing adualism and egocentrism. Then, decentration leads to its increasing reflection and integration into the subject's ontology which thereby undergoes a fundamental reorganization.

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[8]Thomas Kesselring and Ulrich Müller, "The Concept of Egocentrism in the Context of Piaget's Theory," *New Ideas in Psychology*, 29, no. 3, 2011, 327-345, 335.

[9]Jean Piaget, *La naissance*, 24, 137, 189. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Hamburg: Meiner 1962, 74.

A level transition does not imply discontinuity. The stage theory just shows the intrinsic logic of intellectual development.

In his four earliest books, published between 1924 and 1927, Piaget attributed the decentration phases to different cognitive levels and assumed that an initial quasi-autistic world view (level 1) was followed by egocentrism (level 2) which then is overcome by perspective coordination (level 3). When in the following years he observed his own children from birth to age 2-3, he became aware of a decentering process which occurs within the first 18 months of life (level 1). From then on he regarded the three-stage sequence as a repetitive development cycle.[10] This assumption was additionally confirmed when in the 1950s Piaget and Inhelder discovered a similar stage cycle, occurring between 11-12 years and adulthood.[11]

Some more remarks are necessary to understand what development of abilities and underlying cognitive structures really means.

(i) In the course of development, cognitive capabilities become increasingly complex. This is also true for the meaning of concepts like "me", “self-awareness” etc. which changes fundamentally on each level. Self-awareness, e.g., is first associated with corporal identity, then with personal identity and finally with being a personality. The meaning of "other" and the ways how people perceive and understand each other change profoundly several times, too.

(ii) Development is also a source of diversification, comparable to the growth of a deciduous tree. The trunk divides into ever finer branches which finally point in all directions. Cognitive abilities differ less among babies than among infants, whose cognitive achievements again differ less than those of schoolchildren. In adulthood professional

[10]The new version becomes evident in Piaget’s publications from the year 1936 on. Very neatly he explains the stage repetition on successive levels in Jean Piaget, *L’épistémologie génétique*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France 1970, chap. I.3, first paragraph.

[11]Inhelder, Piaget, *De la logique*, 342s.

specialization literally belongs to personal identity. Therefore, when describing cognitive and affective development, we should be aware of the risk to follow just one branch of the tree and end with the capabilities and self-image of, say, a British parliament member, an African peasant or a Chinese sailor. The following recapitulation thus concerns the development of what I have suggested to call a *blueprint* or *plan* which regulates the formation of cognitive structures.[12] Piaget used the term "schème" for a behavior pattern and his underlying cognitive processes. A scheme assimilates data from the environment and accommodates itself to the environmental constraints. What I call a blueprint is a bundle of schemes which develops through "reflective abstraction".[13] It is a plan for building up abilities or cognitive structures, but not itself an ability or a cognitive structure, in the same way in which the blueprint for the bees building honeycombs is not itself a honeycomb. But whereas beehives are always built according to the same pattern, human knowledge is produced according to an evolving pattern which changes over time and becomes more and more complex. The distinction between *blueprint* and *cognitive structures* suggests itself for two reasons:

(a) An operational system (e.g., the logic of classes) does not itself develop and change into another system (e.g., propositional logic).

(b) When the blueprint has developed up to a certain stage, suitable new structures can, but not necessarily must be formed, and this can happen in all (cognitive, social, emotional, etc.) domains. Different individuals develop different abilities and specialize in different domains. The stage theory unveils

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[12]I have suggested to adopt this view to avoid misunderstandings related to Piaget's stage theory: Thomas Kesselring, "The Mind's Staircase Revised," in *The Cambridge Companion to Piaget*, Ulrich Müller, Jeremy Carpendale, Leslie Smith, eds., Cambridge: University Press 2009, 371-399, 383.

[13]Jean Piaget, *Recherches sur l'abstraction réfléchissante*, 2 vols., *Études d'épistémologie génétique*, 34 and 35, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1977.

just the rules according to which the *blueprint*, which directs the genesis of the underlying structures, itself develops.[14]

In what follows, I'll give an overview of how self-awareness, awareness of others and mutual respect arise and change their feature on the way through the four aforementioned levels. Each of them is marked by a series of cognitive tasks the developing subject masters by *differentiation* and *coordination*.[15]

3. Development of Self- and Others' Awareness

3.1. The First Level: Sensori-Motor Behaviour

The mental ambience in which a newborn baby lives can best be represented as a kind of supposed collective consciousness and collective emotional state. The initial "feeling as one" later on transforms into empathy. After 18 months, more or less, a first kind of self-awareness arises: the child recognizes himself in a mirror.

First Stage: In the first weeks after birth the baby neither distinguishes between itself and the external environment nor between itself and another person. "Ego-awareness is produced by a dissociation of reality".[16] We don't know the baby's mental state when it focuses its attention on anything particular. Some invariance (or conservation) schemes are probably inborn, e.g. that of an object's real growth independent from its apparent growth, depending on the distance from the viewer. Yet, visual,

[14]Piaget described this development as cyclic and illustrated it with a suspended spiral or pyramid evolving top-down. This spiral is reminiscent of winded snail shell, but what develops is a *program* for building up cognitive structures - the *blueprint*. Development is autonomous, structures are generated by reflection, there is no structure coming from outside.

[15]For describing these processes I'll refer to the development in a certain cultural environment, that of the occident. But there is no reason to assume that there are cultures in which similar differentiation and coordination processes don't occur.

[16]Jean Piaget, *La représentation du monde chez l'enfant,* Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1926, 112.

acoustic, tactile impressions, etc. alternate without apparent order. Everything seems fluctuating and changing irregularly.[17] The baby doesn't show any specific search strategy apart from the lip movements when feeling the maternal breast. Consciousness remains, as it were, in a twilight state.

During his first months, the baby learns to imitate the emotional expression of another person who reacts to something exciting. However, it attributes emotions neither to itself nor to others and does not yet differentiate between an emotion (inside view) and its expression (outside view). Emotions are felt, but not reflected upon, and they are *neither mine nor yours*, but *mine and yours* altogether. This explains the above mentioned phenomenon of collective screaming.

From this initial *adualism* an important conclusion can be drawn: Human beings are not born as egoists: "[A]ll behaviour involves interest in the sense of activation", but this "does not mean that all behaviour involves interest in the sense of selfishness. In fact, the selfish or unselfish character of activation interest cannot be judged in advance."[18]

***Second Stage*:** The baby's emotions become more differentiated. E.g., disgust is originally a reaction to an acidic or bitter taste in the mouth but then becomes a reaction to unappetizing things, such as dirt, worms, bugs, etc. Babies coordinate perceptions with emotions before they coordinate the different senses with each other and with targeted body movements.[19]

Through imitation of others, the baby adapts its expression behaviour to the emotion, associating both with the given situation, e.g., of fright or pain. When it observes another person's pain mimic, it associates with it pain feeling and

[17]Daniel Stern, *Diary of a Baby*, New York: Basic Books, 1990, first chapter.

[18]Piaget, *Intelligence and Affectivity*, 85.

[19]Hans-Jürgen Lang, *Die ersten Lebensjahre: Psychoanalytische Entwicklungspsychologie und empirische Forschungsergebnisse*, München: Profil, 1988, 114.

discomfort.[20] Later on, its emotional identification with his caregivers gets cracks, and its "feeling as one" with them breaks down. Emotional adualism diminishes, and the baby gets increasingly aware of the distinction between itself in terms of a living, sentient organism, and the other person who henceforth gains contours.

From the age of about nine months, the baby actively seeks opportunities to emotionally identify with its beloved persons. This occurs when the child and someone else, e.g., its mother, focus their looks from different perspectives on the same sensory entity. Amazing for the child is not the perspective difference, but the "joint attention," as Tomasello calls it.[21]

At the same age, the baby lives in a world of "sensory images". These are entities it can see, grasp, take into the mouth and hear when they produce some noise. When a baby explores a sensory image and tries to combine the different sensorial impressions it accomplishes a coordination task by itself, whereas in moments of "joint attention" it does the same together with someone else.[22]

The infant also learns directing another person's gaze by pointing something of interest. Gestures that resemble pointing

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[20]From the combination of imitation and conditioning some psychologists derive the origin of empathy (Martin Hoffman, *Empathy and Moral Development: Implication for Caring and Justice*, Cambridge: University Press, 2000, 65, and Manfred Holodynski, *Emotionen – Entwicklung und Regulation*, Heidelberg: Springer, 2006, 87-92). Conditioning is a form of habituation, whereas imitation is usually attributed to an innate ability. This means, however, that its genesis remains a mystery. What sounds mechanistic in these theories is stated differently by German philosopher Max Scheler who associates imitative behaviour with feeling according to the other's feeling (*Nachfühlung*) and derives it from an original "feeling as one" (*Einsfühlung*) (Max Scheler, *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie,* Bonn: Bouvier, 1985, 29). Empathy then is a kind of reflection on what we feel when we try to adopt another person's feeling (Scheler, *Wesen*, 24).

[21]Michael Tomasello, *Origins of Human Communication,* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press 2008, 74, 78, 179ff., 194f.

[22]In both cases there is no need to coordinate the perspectives.

acts arise already at about three months, but only at 11 to 14 months they are used for communication purposes, such as (1) sharing emotions and attitudes, (2) informing others or helping them, and (3) requesting help.[23] For instance, an infant points to its empty glass, meaning "Fill it up!"[24] learning from other people's similar gestures. These early abilities indicate that human development is oriented towards cooperation.[25]

Tomasello thinks that a one-year-old child who shows something to someone, *knows that the other person knows that it wants to show her something*.[26] However, the baby does not yet reflect on anything, and certainly not on another's mental state. His pointing gesture is just a trick to get the other's attention and "feel as one" with him.

Matching emotions, too, is like feeling as one. Yet, it turns out to be just a special case of empathy. Often we don't feel what the other feels: A child of age two who comforts his comrade, intuitively ascribes him other emotions than his own. A mother who empathizes with her sick child feels uncomfortable, while the sleeping child doesn't.[27] So empathy goes far beyond sharing another person's emotional state.

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[23]Tomasello, *Origins*, 123.

[24]Tomasello, *Origins*, 126f., 152, 154.

[25]According to Tomasello this distinguishes *Homo Sapiens* from the chimpanzee, who understand pointing gestures almost exclusively as imperative gestures. Tomasello speculates that this holds for monkeys, too: They could never be observed sharing attention in a context of help or helpful messages (*Origins*, 34-38).

[26]Tomasello mentions repeatedly Grice's communicative rule according to which we communicate with the intention: "I want you to know that I want something of you" (*Origins*, 82f., 88). Tomasello associates this to 12 months old infants, but concedes an uncertainty: "12-months-olds … seem not to have fully mastered all aspects of the Gricean communicative intention or norms of cooperation" (*Origins*, 144f.).

[27]This example is given by Adam Smith: *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976, 12.

With about nine months, infants find suitable means for reaching a goal,[28] and at the age of 12 months they attribute the same skill to others.[29] The time lag is due to the fact that one can only ascribe others (and oneself) abilities one is aware of at least in a rudimentary way. So, with nine months, babies "understand others as intentional and rational agents like the self", they know "that others have goals" and "participate with others in interactions involving joint goals, intentions and attention."[30]

***Third Stage*:** At the age of one and half years, the child reaches what Piaget calls the "permanent object scheme" by coordinating sensory images. He considers an object as something existing in space and time, independently of his own actions and perceptions.[31] Some months earlier, an object seemed to disappear, when a significant image changed. An example is Piaget's nine month old son, who tried to grasp a full milk bottle, but when Piaget turned it over so that the pacifier disappeared, stopped the grasping trials, so as if the bottle had vanished.[32]

Meanwhile the baby reacts with search behaviour, when it accidentally loses sight of something interesting.[33] It knows, a material object has a backside, and attentively studies its different aspects. Piaget calls this implicit knowledge *"renversabilité"*. In a mathematical language, the "permanent object" is a function according to which by appropriate manipulations we can transform certain "sensory images" into others or make them disappear and reappear.

With 18 months, the infant has an en-active, sensori-motor knowledge of his body and limbs - hands, fingers, feet, toes –

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[28]Jean Piaget, *The naissance de l'intelligence chez l'enfant*, Neuchâtel : delachaux et Niestlé 1936, observation, 122-126.

[29]Tomasello, *Origins*, 139.

[30]Tomasello, *Origins*, 138.

[31]Jean Piaget*, La construction du réel chez l'enfant*, Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé 1937, chapter 1.5.

[32]Piaget, *La Construction*, observation, 78a.

[33]Piaget, *La Construction*, observation, 64 -66.

his impulses, perceptions, emotions, etc., and recognizes his own face in a mirror.[34] He knows intuitively that his body remains the same regardless of its location, movements, and sensational changes. But he does not yet know his gender and has no idea of mental activities such as thinking or getting one's impulses under control. He realizes when others refer to himself, and in the detour via the other person refers to himself. First this reference remains intuitive, en-active. Later, with about 18 months, he refers to himself from an imagined external perspective.

The understanding of another person develops in conformity with self-awareness. According to Piaget, "imitation is necessary to first give a complete picture of one's own body and then to compare the general reactions of the other and the ego."[35] Soon after, the infant will realize that others have their own feelings and their own kinaesthetic sensations.

3.2. The Second Level: Preoperative Level

"In this second year of life … occurs a kind of Copernican revolution: … the body becomes embedded, as an object among others, into a space which encloses it and the other objects."[36] This implies that a new ability is arising: *imagination*. This is, so to speak, a *second order activity*. The infant is aware of his sensori-motor activity, whereas imaginative activity remains unreflected. Now he thinks on absent things and remembers past experiences.

Motor skills continue developing, but dealing with symbolic function is new. The infant scribbles and draws, uses symbols, plays imitation and role games. Language acquisition accelerates, since its prerequisites – such as imagination, permanent objects as signifiers (according to Piaget), and

[34]Hoffman, *Empathy and Moral Development*, 69f.

[35]Jean Piaget and Bärbel Inhelder: *La psychologie de l'enfant*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France 1966, 4th chap. V., 116

[36]Piaget, *L'épistémologie génétique*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France 1970, chap. I.1.

awareness of a common background shared with others ("joint attention", according to Tomasello) – have previously evolved.

As for social understanding, "the other person continues existing as an affective, living active object when she is not physically present." This knowledge "gives rise to new affects such as sympathy and antipathy to other persons and lasting self-awareness and self-esteem."[37] Yet, the infant acts initially "with an unconscious egocentrism, which continues that of the baby. Only in the course of time it adapts to analogous equilibrium laws." We observe "a partial repetition of the development that the baby has already pervaded at the elementary level of sensori-motor adaptation processes."[38]

First Stage: Egocentrism marks the child's social relations, spatial understanding, and worldview. He doesn't clearly distinguish between reality and fantasy,[39] individual and species,[40] sign and signifier, thus taking a name for an appendage of the respective object. In imitation games, Piaget stated a "kind of confusion of the ego with the other" and a "lack of clear distinction between the inside and the outside."[41]

After all, from age two on, an infant no longer doubts that others can feel different than himself, and attributes wishes and feelings even to non-human beings he imitates or represents symbolically.[42] He empathizes with a comrade who has hurt

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[37]Piaget, Inhelder, *La psychologie*, 108s.

[38]Jean Piaget, *Six Études de Psychologie*, Paris: Soc. Nouvelle des Éditions-Gouthier, 1964, First Study, chapter about the child from age two to seven, 3rd paragraph.

[39]Stern, *Diary*, chap. V.

[40]When Piaget's daughter, Jacqueline, after discovering a slug found another slug, she commented: "Again the slug!", and didn't understand the question whether it was the same or another slug, as if, what she saw, was the prototype of a slug. Jean Piaget, *La formation du symbole chez l'enfant – Imitation, jeu et rêve*, Neuchâtel : Delachaux et Niestlé 1945, observation, 107.

[41]Piaget, *La représentation*, 110s.

[42]Paul Harris, *Children and Emotion: The Development of Psychological Understanding*, Oxford / New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989, 69f.

and comforts him, or intentionally annoys someone with whom he feels frustrated.

Second Stage: Children increasingly take account of differences or relationships. They compare things and use the comparative. *The adult is big, the child is small*. Now they say*, The child is smaller than the adult.* Yet, they fail in coordinating the results of two or more comparisons. From *A* < *B* and *B* < *C* they don't conclude that *A* < *C*, unless A and C are present. Nor do they understand the reversibility (*"réversibilité"*) of a relationship.

"Reversibility" or "mutuality" also lack in social understanding. With three years infants are able to hide their feelings and simulate emotions they don't have (e.g., to show pleasure about a gift they are disappointed about), but vehemently deny that humans can hide their emotions.[43] At age 4-5 most children distinguish correctly between *left* and *right*, but don't understand that the left and right arms of a child sitting opposite to them are reversed.[44] At the same age a child doesn't realize "that he is himself the brother or sister of his brother or sister."[45] He ignores that people can say something they don't believe. When he tells someone a lived adventure, he ignores the listener's difficulties to understand, and a listener of the same age associates whatsoever with the story, without considering possible misunderstandings. Due to lacking mutuality, infants cannot understand the meaning of a *secret* or a *surprise party*.

Toddlers often cry around in a public room at full volume.[46] Though they empathize with others, they don't mind to disturb the people present, limiting their attention to the small circle of

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[43]Harris, *Children and Emotion,* 138.

[44]Jean Piaget, *Le jugement et le raisonnement chez l'enfant,* Neuchâtel, Delachaux et Niestlé 1924, 3rd chap., § 4 ; Jean Piaget and Bärbel Inhelder, *La représentation de l'espace chez l'enfant*, Paris : Presses Universitaires de France 1948, 14th chap., 1.

[45]Piaget, Inhelder, *La psychologie*, 4th chap. VI., 122.

[46]Observation by myself. At least in Europe this observation can easily be made in public transportation.

their caregivers. This circle is a part of the larger, anonymous crowd around which the child fades out. There is an analogy in cognitive development: Infants don't understand set inclusion. When they focus on two subsets, they cannot at the same time be attentive to the whole set. When we show them a bouquet of flowers with four lilies and seven tulips and ask, whether there are more tulips (subset) or more flowers (set), they mostly say: "more tulips", because focusing the subsets hinders them to consider the whole.

An infant feels the asymmetry in competence and power between educator and pupil or adult and child. The adult cares for the child and protects him, but gives also instructions, expects obedience, and can punish. Therefore, he evokes both, affection and fear.[47] The child's respect for his parents, a mixture of love and fear, is *unilateral,*[48] not *mutual*. The caregivers don't have the same mixed feelings towards the child, and the child doesn't ascribe them such feelings.

Power asymmetry gives the child a *sense of duty* that depends on two conditions which are both necessary and together sufficient: 1. instructions … that are unconditioned (not lying, etc.); and 2. the acceptance of these instructions, which presupposes that the one who receives the instruction has a special feeling for the person who gives it (the child does not accept instructions from anyone). Yet, "love is not sufficient to create a commitment, and fear alone will only result in a ... selfish submission."[49] In fact, the child's respect for his caregivers contains a third, symmetric element not mentioned by Piaget, identification.[50]

The adult-child asymmetry can create emotional disturbances. If the educator lacks authority the basis for trust gets unstable and the child revolts. So, the "opposition crisis" of

[47]Jean Piaget, *Le jugement moral chez l'enfante*, Paris: Presse universitaires de France 1932, 281, 303.

[48]Jean Piaget, *Le jugement moral,* 281, 291, 309.

[49]Piaget, Inhelder, *La psychologie*, 4th chap., V.1., 116s.

[50]Tomasello, *Warum wir kooperieren*, Berlin: Suhrkamp 2010, 46; analogous 41ff..

children of 2-4 years often reflects inadequate adult behaviour.[51] If the relation between caregivers and child is stable and trustworthy, the child may project his parents' authority into an "*'ideal ego'* giving rise to compelling role models and a moral consciousness."[52] When a child discovers that the capabilities of his supposedly almighty father are limited, he may project the idea of an almighty authority in a higher entity, thus discovering God and developing religious feelings.[53]

Infants regard an evil act as an act that causes material damage and / or contradicts the authority's directive, even if the intention was good.[54] They have intentions and know that others have intentions, but nevertheless don't consider them when valuing actions.

***Third Stage*:** The child coordinates relations (and results of comparisons). He learns to read and write, thus dealing with second-order signs. A letter sequence stands for a word that in turn refers to a signifier. The child now succeeds in the above-mentioned elementary logical inferences and the nesting sequence of natural numbers. He is able to attribute others social feelings that in their turn reflect other people's feelings. An example is the following statement of a child with age 6-7: "Diana falls over and hurts herself. She knows that the other children will laugh if she shows how she feels. So she tries to hide how she feels". Or in a single sentence: "She didn't want the other children to know that she's sad that she fall over."[55]

3.3. The Third Level: Concrete Operations

The transition from the second to the third level is structurally analogous to that from the first to the second level. Just as an infant of 18 months can imagine absent things, a child of 7-8 years uses a *second-order imagination*. He realizes the left-right

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[51]Piaget, Inhelder, *La psychologie* 4th chap., IV, 1., 109f.
[52]Piaget and Inhelder, *La psychologie*, 4th chap.,V., 116.
[53]Piaget, *Le jugement morale*, 303.
[54]Piaget and Inhelder, *La psychologie,* 4th chap., V, 3, 119.
[55]Harris, *Children and Emotion*, 139.

interchange after a 180 degrees' rotation by imagining (from an outside perspective) the two individuals sitting in opposition to each other. To get the concept of natural numbers also presupposes a second order imagination: Children under the age of 6-7 fail to imagine nested sets, though they are familiar with Russian dolls' being contained one in the other. The latter are material objects, while set inclusion concerns imagined entities. Second order imagination is also required to understand the invariance of a quantity, e.g. a glass of water being poured into a bowl, whereas object permanence only requires elementary imagination.

Piaget was not aware of the role second-order imagination plays in concrete operational thinking and in managing social relations. Level-3 children are able to take on someone else's view without giving up their own view. More than that: Child A makes an image of child B and, as a part of it, an image of the image child B makes of child A. *'I know that you know that I know'*. Or, *'I see that you see that I see you.'* This is the reciprocity Tomasello attributes to children of 18 months. It is certainly realized at the age of 7 to 8 years.

The reflection through the mirror of the other leads to a new advanced kind of self-awareness.[56] This configuration is the basis of what Piaget called "*respect mutuel*".[57] Now, in a social game and in cooperation, children supervise the other's behaviour and expect them to fulfil their part, knowing that they do so, too. The consequences of this new view on oneself and the other are manifold:

(i) A child is now able to engage in "relationships based on *mutual respect* and leading to certain *autonomy*."[58] "From the age of 7-8 on, interpersonal justice outweighs obedience and

[56]In the same sense, Adam Smith wrote that people are the other's "mirror": *Theory*, 110. Also David Hume: "the minds of men are mirrors to one another", David Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, Oxford: University Press 1978, II.ii.5.

[57]Piaget, *Le jugement morale*, 283,287, 291, 296,298, 309ss.; Piaget, *Intelligence*, 59.

[58]Piaget and Inhelder, *La psychologie*, 4th chap., V 4, My italics.

becomes a central norm which in the affective domain corresponds to the coherence norms in the field of cognitive operations."[59]

(ii) The coercion implied in a norm stems from the *binding force of mutual expectation*. Every participant is a source of possible criticism. He represents, in a weakened form, an internalized authority. Piaget writes: "The element of fear related to unilateral respect gradually disappears in favour of the moral fear of sinking in the eyes of the respected individual: the desire to be respected is balanced with that of respecting the other."[60]

(iii) Interaction based on mutual respect entails acts of *valuation*. According to Piaget, values are (relatively) invariant schemes of feelings. Feelings are unstable, values rather constant. To be mirrored through others influences self-awareness[61] and to be valued by others self-esteem.

Liking a person implies attributing her a relatively stable value. We find someone sympathetic, when our feelings related to him are (in the average) positive. To like someone, adds Piaget, is not only due to a feeling that emanates from him, but often derives from social interaction whereby the partners intuitively value each other: "Mutual respect entails the necessity of moral noncontradiction. One cannot simultaneously value his partner and act in such a way as to be devalued by him."[62]

Valuing acts are directed towards an ideal equilibrium:

Subject 1, by his acts, words, etc, exerts an *action* on Subject 2. This action (A_1) represents a *negative expenditure* for Subject 1 which will be appreciated by Subject 2. The

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[59]Piaget, Inhelder, *La psychologie*, 4 V 4.

[60]Piaget, *Le Jugement morale*, 309.

[61]In the words of German philosopher Ernst Tugendhat: "A person can only relate to herself by relating to others and retrace the relation of others to her" – that is, by "taking the attitude of the other" towards herself. Tugendhat, *Selbstbewusstsein und Selbstbestimmung*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1979, 252.

[62]Piaget, *Intelligence and Affectivity*, 67.

> *satisfaction* (S_2) that Subject 2 feels will, therefore, correspond to A_1. The roles, of course, can be reversed. … Subject 2 … will *feel a debt* (D_2) with respect to Subject 1. Because of reciprocity, he will invest Subject 1 with a *positive value* (V_1) manifested as a *feeling of goodwill*.[63]

Both, subject 1 and 2, aspire a balance – subject 1 between expenditure and reward, and subject 2 between satisfaction and gratefulness.[64] Mutual sympathy arises, when on both sides the balances are positive without differing too much.

(iv) Concrete operational thinking is essential for understanding *social agreements* and *norms*. An agreement is based on mutual promises and accompanied by mutual expectations: *I expect others not to kill, ambush, steal; and I know that they expect from me the same*. Children of 8-10 years understand the Golden Rule: "Don't do to others what you don't want they do to you."[65]

(v) Norm awareness influences *moral feelings*. Piaget distinguished "normative feelings," based on mutual respect, from "semi-normative" feelings which reflect unilateral respect. Level 3 children derive norms from agreements made in social games or cooperation. Smaller infants confound norms with instructions from an authority. Therefore, on level 2, "feelings are not yet normative," but prepare

> the establishment of moral norms defined by three characteristics parallel to the criteria for [concrete] operations: (a) a moral norm can be generalized to all analogous situations, not just to identical ones; (b) a moral norm lasts beyond the situation and conditions that engender it; and (c) ... [it] is linked to a feeling of autonomy. From 2 to 7 years, none of these conditions is met. … norms

[63]Piaget, *Intelligence and Affectivity*, 45f. My italics.

[64]These processes influence self-esteem (Piaget, *Intelligence and Affectivity*, 47ff.) and different degrees of sympathy for the other (Piaget, "*Essay sur la théorie des valeurs qualitatives en sociologie*," in J. Piaget, *Études Sociologiques*, Geneva: Droz, 1967, 100-142, 114).

[65]Piaget, *Le jugement morale*, 258.

are not generalized but are valid only under particular conditions.[66]

After the age of 8, however, children understand that a norm is valid "in any situation."[67]

Remorse (feeling guilt) and resentment are another type of moral feelings that differ between level 2 and level 3 children (although Piaget did not touch them). A younger child feels guilt, when he fears to be reprimanded, and an older child, when he has broken a moral rule, even if there is no risk to be criticized. This explains why children under eight years in their majority don't ascribe a chief negative feelings, such as remorse but, in the reverse, satisfaction and wellbeing. This phenomenon, called "the happy victimizer,"[68] seems astonishing, since at the age of 3-4 infants are already acquainted with the instruction "don't steal!" and empathize with the victim: "when you take your comrade's toy, he will scream!" But they forget all this, when the temptation is strong and the authority absent. It is not proven, but probable, that many children who ascribe the thief happiness would themselves steal and cheat when they were unobserved.[69]

According to their age, children also react differently when other people violate a norm. An older child who feels damaged by the norm violation resents the offender, while a younger

[66]Piaget, *Intelligence and affectivity*, 55.

[67]Piaget, *Intelligence and affectivity*, 55.

[68]Gertrud Nunner-Winkler, "*Moralisches Wissen – moralische Motivation – moralisches Handeln*," in *Kinder und Kindheit: Soziokulturelle Muster – Sozialisationstheoretische Perspektiven,* M. S. Honig, H. R. Leu, and U. Nissen, eds., München, 1996, 129-156. See also Judith Smetana, "Social Cognitive Domain Theory: Consistencies and Variations in Children's Moral and Social Judgments" in *Handbook of Moral Development,* M. Killen and J. Smetana, eds., Mahwah, NJ*: Lawrence Erlbaum,* 2006, 119–153.

[69]Nunner-Winkler, "*Moralisches Wissen*," 154ff.

may protest and look for the authority to "whistle" the wrongdoer.[70]

First Stage: Piaget didn't say almost anything on level 3 children's social development, and he didn't relate adualism or egocentrism to the first stage. Yet, they both occur. A cognitive example is – again – understanding natural numbers: Children at age 6-8 take a number series as something concrete (therefore the expression "natural" numbers), like a row of pearls on a string. This blocks their access to the domain of negative and irrational numbers which only becomes possible when numbers are considered as representing quantitative differences or ratios: 2 = 8-6, and $^{8}/_{4}$. The relational view of numbers opens the door to the kingdom of maths, with negative, rational and (later) irrational numbers: 6-8 = -2; and $^{5}/_{4}$ = 1.25 and $\sqrt{2}$ = 1,41421… The Pythagoreans absolutized the conviction that all numbers are ratios between natural numbers. When they found that this is not true for the diagonal, they were unable to decentre and plunged into a mental crisis.

As for social development, level 3 adualism occurs in different domains.

(i) At age 6-9, children believe everything an authority says. They don't critically reflect about what others think and hardly distance themselves from the teacher's judgment, even when he assesses their achievements and capacities. This can provoke a self-fulfilling prophecy.

(ii) Kohlberg has pointed out that children of 8-10 years identify or over-identify with their caregiver's, adopt their values and are eager to please them.[71] And Kagan added that at

[70]Children who grow up in a violent environment may develop a sense of wrongdoing, but little or no sense of moral guilt, since they haven't internalized moral norms. Instead of resenting a victimizer, they rather seek direct revenge, and instead of feeling indignation, they are more likely to feel dread when imagining that the damage could have hit them or might hit them in the future.

[71]Lawrence Kohlberg, "Moral and Moralization: The Cognitive-Developmental Approach", in L. Kohlberg, *Essay on Moral*

this age children also strongly identify with their own role. When they recognize

> to which age, gender and ethnic category they belong to, they think that they have to adapt their characteristics to the corresponding category. … So a boy thinks, 'If boys do not cry and I'm a boy, then I'm not allowed to cry.' Accordingly, a girl will feel insecure, if her behavior does not correspond with what she understands by being female.[72]

Second Stage: In several fields the child experiences the constraints of discrepancies:

(i) Partners who cooperate not always valuate their interaction as being just. An exchange can be imbalanced, but it can take some time to relate the suffered frustrations to this imbalance. So, prolonged cooperation with the same partners entails an intuitive balancing exercise affecting self-esteem. No wonder that children already select and sometimes change their friends.

(ii) Piaget made clear "that inferiority and superiority feelings" don't simply result from other people's judgments. The child "evaluates himself continuously and often independently of social relationships." "Success and failure can influence subsequent behaviour." Therefore, "people can have a better or worse opinion of themselves than someone else does."[73]

(iii) At the first stage of level 3, the child doesn't clearly distinguish between a person and her role. Later, he becomes aware of this distinction: mother, father, daughter, son, etc. are persons, but also roles. Gender role awareness increases and often provokes alienation between girls and boys.[74] In Western societies male and female role expectations differ less than

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Development. Vol. II: The Psychology of Moral Development, San Francisco: Harper & Row 1984, 170-205, stage 3 in Table I.

[72]Jerome Kagan, *The Nature of the Child*, New York: Basic Books, 1984, 196.

[73]Piaget, *Intelligence and Affectivity*, 48.

[74]Of course, this alienation is also due to the uncertainty in dealing with one's own libidinal strivings during and after puberty.

elsewhere, but they obviously still differ. With growing awareness that gender specific interests are complementary, the alienation weakens, and gender relations are rebuilt in a new and more reflected way. If mutual respect is lacking, however, they easily fail.

Third Stage: Harmonizing the motives for disagreement helps diminishing and avoiding quarrel. This requires clear awareness of the distinction between constraints and wishes and between roles and persons. I can openly criticize my superior at home, where I am a free person, but possibly not within the institution, in my role of his subordinate.

We disagree with another's actions when they (a) harm ourselves or others we care about, (b) contradict our moral conviction, or (c) reflect another value scale.[75] Piaget distinguished between selfish and moral approval ("approbation morale"),[76] attributing the latter to valuations undertaken from the other's viewpoint (→ "*réciprocité morale*").[77] Of course, we then have to share the other's moral value system and value scale, too. To coordinate our own with another person's valuation, we should consider all these differences.

3.4. The Fourth Level: Formal Operations

In a similar way as *concrete operations* are based on a second order imagination, *formal operations* are based on *second order operations* – operations on operations.[78] Examples are: dealing with combinatorics, probability calculations, integral and differential functions. On the concrete operational level children don't think about their own thinking, but on the formal operational level they do.[79] To tackle with proofs,

[75]Piaget, "Essay sur la théorie,",114.

[76]Piaget, "Essay sur la théorie," 124f.

[77]Piaget criticizes Émile Durkheim's doctrine, according to which morality derives from a "law-sanctioned set of rules" (Piaget, *Le jugement morale*, 4th chap., 401.

[78]Piaget, *L'épistémologie*, chap. I.6.

[79]Bärbel Inhelder and Jean Piaget, *The Growth of Logical Thinking from Childhood to Adolescence*, London: Routledge 1958 [orig. 1955], 340.

refutation, avoiding contradictions, etc., marks a new intellectual mentality. Thinking becomes auto-referential. "Second-order thoughts", as Piaget calls it,[80] allows hypothetical-deductive arguing and emancipates from given reality. A possibility is no longer considered a deviation from reality, but in the reverse, reality an intersection of possibilities.

Piaget described this change once more as a cognitive revolution: "When the cognitive field is again enlarged by the structuring of formal thought, a third form of egocentrism comes into view." It "is one of the most enduring features of adolescence; it persists until a new ... decentering process makes possible the true beginnings of adult work."[81] The adolescent enters into adult society and dreams of improving the world. Together with a "life program" he develops "projects for change". Both are complementary.[82] Formal operational thinking allows evaluating different possible life plans. Essential is an orientation to ideals, such as "humanity, social justice ..., freedom of conscience, civic or intellectual courage, and so forth."[83] Ideals give the life a direction. They are first incorporated in admired individuals (which marks an adualism), before they become independent.

Looking for one's future role in society and building up a personality are two sides of the same coin. Piaget says, "personality is the decentered ego," in a threefold way: (i) "Personality is the submission of the ego to an ideal which it embodies but which goes beyond it and subordinates it." (ii) "it is the adherence to a scale of values, not in the abstract but relative to a given task"; and (iii) the "adoption of a social role, not ready-made (...) but a role which the individual will create in filling it."[84]

We can define a role as a *social function which reflects the relation to and responsibility for other people*. To bear a role implies

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[80]Inhelder and Piaget, *De la logique*, 340
[81]Inhelder and Piaget, *De la logique,* 343
[82]Inhelder and Piaget, *De la logique* 340
[83]Inhelder and Piaget, *De la logique* 349
[84]Inhelder and Piaget, *De la logique* 349

to have responsibility for the affected people and their needs. The reflective nature of secondary roles gives their bearers the posture of *second power persons*.

A child of 7-9 years is hardly aware of the distinction between primary roles referring to family and kinship, and secondary roles that stabilize the functioning of a state, an enterprise or any organized society. Between the demands on both levels, loyalty and role conflicts can occur. As Lawrence Kohlberg pointed out,[85] the younger child's ethics, which is related to small groups and guided by the Golden Rule, becomes relativized by an ethics related to the welfare of the whole society, guided by the rule: "Don't do something which causes damage, if everyone does it!" Institutions require well defined relations between role bearers. Institutional meetings occur between role occupants, that is, representatives of groups or professions, specialists, lobbyists. Persons have *abilities*, role occupants *competences*, in the sense of tasks, permits and privileges. Roles provide their bearer with power (influence) and prestige (honour). Titles are signs that give role occupants or role candidates visibility. Showing off and bluff are strategies to increase one's own visibility and make one's own abilities seem bigger than they are.

Personal skills often remain undiscovered, even when they are extraordinary, unless their owner acquires a title or occupies a role that makes them visible. Conversely, a role holders' skills do not always correspond to their function. This gap, known as *Trump-Syndrome*, is a popular topic for satire and cabaret.

Cooperation accompanied by mutual respect is the basis of culture, civilization, and ethics.[86] But there are other types of interaction, too, and adolescents can't avoid getting acquainted with them. People compete, negotiate, make exchanges, etc.

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[85]Lawrence Kohlberg, *The Meaning and Measurement of Moral Development*, Worcester, Mass.: Clark University Press 1979.

[86]Thomas Kesselring, "Dialogue and Ethics: Can the Study of Dialogue Teach us Something about Ethics?" *Journal of Dharma* 42.3, 2017, 311-334.

Human relations can be peaceful or conflictive, symmetric or asymmetric, etc. Role hierarchies are not limited to feudal society. The higher a personality's rank, the bigger is her power and responsibility. Pride and shame are associated with good or bad role exertion. Most human relations are shaped by formal or informal power constellations. A similar variety of interactions, though on another level, occur between groups (parties, clubs, companies, churches, etc.), and also, at a higher level, between states or nations.

First and Second Stage: Adolescents' insecure self-assessment and oscillation between high-flying ambitions and experiences of own insufficiency indicate the initial egocentric phase. The dreamed-about role of prophet or reformer is not reducible to primary and secondary roles. It is, so to say, a tertiary role. In this respect, level 4 egocentrism is marked by mixing secondary and tertiary roles. Experience with social reality leads the adolescent to abandon his high-flying plans, unless he succeeds in fact to transform his society by creating something new and important. Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara's social innovations and school foundation in 19th century Kerala is a clear example.[87]

***Third Stage*:** Piaget never spoke about a transition to level 5. According to the explained rules of level transition in stage 3, the structures built up in level 4 are sooner or later reflected. Second order operations are most familiar in scientific thinking which continues evolving. A reflection about scientific thinking leads us to Philosophy of Science.

As for social thinking, an important task on level 4 (and later) is to coordinate the interests, needs, ambitions etc., of different nations or cultures. At the beginning of this process egocentrism may be common again: "Spontaneously, our minds tend to either elevate our national egocentrism to an absolute, or dream of an abstract, ideal humanity. But what is needed is a whole new mental and moral attitude based on mutual

[87]*Joseph Chacko Chennattuserry*, "Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara: A Christian Humanist in Dialogue with Society," *Journal of Dharma*, 42.4, 457-474.

understanding and cooperation."[88] Even a reflected emotional attachment to one's own home country and nation can only emerge after the individual has performed the "decentration and coordination work" required "for making it easier to understand (...) other points of view as one's own."[89] Identification with the (professional, sports etc.) team, (political) party and (religious, ethnic, linguistic) society we belong to influences our political convictions and sometimes entangles us into conflicts. Jean Paul Sartre gave a famous example: should a French resistance fighter go to war against German occupying power (national duty) or care for his sick mother (family duty)?[90]

To negotiate a conflict solution between individuals is easier than between groups or institutions the members of which have different needs and interests that can be affected by the conflict solution. To settle interstate conflicts is still more complex, because to a state includes many ethnic, religious, economic or political groups and institutions etc. often representing conflicting interests.

4. Conclusion: What, If Piaget were Still Alive?

Piaget lived in the 20th century. He was deeply influenced by Immanuel Kant whose moral philosophy is centred on *autonomy* and *mutual respect*. Piaget sketched the child as a creative, inventive being which develops towards autonomy by learning the maximum on his own. In an interview he said: "Whatever one teaches the child, he can no longer invent or discover for himself."[91] Educators became embarrassed with

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[88] Jean Piaget, "*Éducation internationale, une introduction psychologique*," in Jean Piaget, *De la pédagogie*, Paris : Odile Jacob, 1998, 104-117, 114.

[89] Jean Piaget and Anne-Marie Weil, "*Le développement, chez l'enfant, de l'idée de patrie et des relations avec l'étranger*," in Jean Piaget, *Études sociologiques*, 3rd extended edition, Geneva: Droz 1977, 283-306, 284.

[90] Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'existencialisme est un humanism*, Paris 1966, 39f.

[91] Jean-Claude Bringuier, *Conversations libres avec Jean Piaget*, Paris: Robert Laffont 1977, 91f., 196.

this view, because it denies their importance. However, Piaget also emphasized that "the consciousness of the self is ... due to social factors, that is to say to the differentiation of the points of view of others and of oneself."[92] Yet, Piaget was not much interested in learning processes based on social interaction.

Another gap in his theory is the lacking reflection on how the ideas of autonomy, mutual respect and interpersonal justice fit with social hierarchies present in modern societies. Piaget lived in democratic Switzerland, before the era of "globalization" and Internet. Today, two generations later, his hints on the genesis of personality need a supplement.

To integrate into present market society adolescents have to look for (i) a niche allowing them economic survival, (ii) a role for acting in society and (iii) a trademark or brand which gives them visibility. Today the third aspect is more intrusive than in the past.

Nowaday's role models - CEOs, sport and TV stars, radio presenters, politicians, movie actresses, opera singers, etc. - are treated and considered as "super-personalities". Many of them are omnipresent in media, everyone knows their face, their social role and often their love affairs, To be a super-personality and being constantly present in the media seems to be equivalent. To identify with a super-model arouses the desire to present oneself in the media, too. *Influence* (power), *visibility* (media) and *indispensability* (market) – three strategies for reflecting oneself in the "*generalized other*" – are the holy principles for guiding an "ego enterprise".

Identification with a star is neither love nor necessarily admiration. It can turn adults into adolescents who carry their idol's portrait at their heart and dream from being loved, named and followed, similar to him, when in fact confining themselves to be present in internet, where they generate as much Facebook *likes* and Youtube *clicks* as possible.

Some people are eager to meet super-personalities, as many as possible, and take their glory from serving them as mirrors.

[92]Piaget, *La représentation*, 112.

Others create an oeuvre and feel happy when they meet people who act as reflectors for increasing their brilliance. But many people simply feel well when working and creating something meaningful regardless of whether they get noticed or not.

Piaget knew that mirroring the others' appreciation is not the only source of self-esteem. To assure the consent of others provides some support. Yet, to tackle with a chosen task, create something original, and accomplish autonomously an *opus*, is a reliable way to become a self-confident personality. Narcissistic self-mirroring or loosing oneself in social media, hardly leads to this goal. If Piaget were still alive, wouldn't he emphatically remind us this elementary truth?