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KOHLBERG STAGE 7, NATURAL LAW, AND THE TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION AND TM-SIDHI PROGRAM

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This paper discusses how the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi programme brings fulfillment to the ideal of a ‘cosmic perspective’, as expressed in Kohlberg’s Stage 7, and shows that the psychophysiological basis of this state can now be clearly understood in the light of scientific research on the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi programme.—EDITORS

The following is the text of the original paper which was presented at the International Symposium on Moral Education, University of Fribourg, Switzerland, 3 September 1982, and will be published in the proceedings.

This paper focuses on Kohlberg’s notion of Stage 7 in relation to natural law theory, especially that of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, and experimental findings on the Transcendental Meditation (TM) and TM-Sidhi program. The paper discusses the following issues: 1) whether natural law theory is distinct from divine command theory; 2) whether a Stage 7, cosmic perspective may have specific psychophysiological correlates accompanying this high level of human development; and 3) whether the development to a cosmic perspective may be facilitated through the practice of the TM and TM-Sidhi program. Specific research on EEG coherence and the group dynamics of collective consciousness is discussed.

This paper focuses on Kohlberg’s notion of a Stage 7 in relation to natural law theory and experimental findings on the Transcendental Meditation (TM) and TM-Sidhi program. In bringing out these relationships, we wish to discuss the following three issues: 1) natural law theory as expressed by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Spinoza, and others as being distinct from divine command theory; 2) Stage 7, cosmic perspective development as having psychophysiological correlates; and 3) development to a cosmic perspective as being facilitated through the practice of the TM and TM-Sidhi program.

STAGE 7, NATURAL LAW AND DIVINE COMMAND THEORIES

Kohlberg emphasizes that beyond the principled level of moral reasoning ultimate questions such as “Why be moral?” still remain to be answered. In contrast to postconventional reasoning, solutions to what Kohlberg calls Stage 7 questions are not resolvable on purely logical or rational grounds but rather are based upon a “cosmic” or “infinite” perspective:

The characteristic of all these “Stage 7” solutions is that they involve contemplative experience of non-egoistic or nondualistic variety. The logic of such experience is sometimes expressed in theistic terms but it need not be. Its essential is the sense of being a part of the whole of life and the adoption of a cosmic, as opposed to a universal humanistic . . . perspective (Kohlberg, 1973, pp. 55–56).

Kohlberg and Power (1981) cite representative natural law theorists, such as Spinoza, as expressing this cosmic perspective. This unified perspective also parallels the quantum mechanical view of the universe where the new notion of “unbroken wholeness” and the “inseparable quantum interconnectedness of the whole universe” supercedes the classical idea of separately and independently existing parts (Bohm and Hiley, 1975).
Kohlberg and Power (1981) point out that natural law theorists, such as Socrates, Martin Luther King, Marcus Aurelius, and Spinoza, were expressing an ethical and ontological view of life that was based upon a cosmic perspective. In the case of Socrates and King, the recognition of a natural higher law was grounded in human reason which prescribed a respect for the human personality. According to King, "any unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal law and natural law. Any law that degrades human personality is just. Any law that uplifts human personality is unjust" (Ducas, 1970, p. 283, see King).

Both Marcus Aurelius and Spinoza emphasized the relationship of man to the cosmos. According to Kohlberg and Power (1981), Aurelius represented a version of natural law thinking in which principles of justice are seen to be in harmony with the laws of the larger cosmic order. Aurelius believed that each person was part of a vaster wholeness and a citizen living under a "world law." According to Spinoza, the ideal state of human nature is "that in which we know the union of man's mind with the whole of nature" (Kohlberg and Power, 1981). The union of the mind with nature represents a fuller knowledge of the mind and a self-awareness about those states of consciousness in which we are in harmony with nature. To see life in terms of wholeness is to love life, because it involves seeing ourselves as a necessary part of life (Kohlberg and Power, 1981).

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, founder of the TM and TM-Sidhi program, provides a theory of natural law which is a modern reformulation and synthesis of the science of consciousness as expressed in Vedic Science and modern science, especially quantum mechanics. According to Maharishi, natural law is the guiding force of life which is responsible for the maintenance and evolution of every aspect of creation. When the awareness of the individual is in alliance or in tune with this most fundamental, cosmic level of life, happiness, progress and harmony dominate. If man's awareness is not in tune with the full potential of natural law, his life will not flow in the stream of evolution—resulting in mistakes, problems and suffering.

According to Maharishi, this cosmic level of human life is experienced as one's own "Self," and it is from here that knowledge of the total potential of natural law is gained:

That knowledge of the Self is the basis of all the laws. It is the first law. That is natural law. That is the reason why self-realization has been emphasized throughout the ages. In every generation there was an emphasis on realizing the Self. In terms of law, it is realizing the home of all the laws of nature, and that is within yourself (Maharishi, 1977, p. 25).

We see from Maharishi's theory of natural law that the basis for determining right action is structured within the nature of the Self. One does not come to act fully in accord with natural law by following the rules or dictates of an authority figure or by merely being knowledgeable of codes of conduct. One comes to act in an evolutionary manner on the basis of directly experiencing the nature of one's "Self," which is the home of all the laws of nature.

Maharishi, in making this distinction, cites a central hymn of the Rig Veda—"Richo akshare parame vyoman yasmin deva adhii vishve nisheduh Yasstana veda kimricha karishyati ya ittadvidusta ime samasate"—as expressing the fundamental principle that the ability to act in accord with natural law is by virtue of the direct experience of the Self. Knowledge of natural law is structured in consciousness:

... for he who does not know that first law, he who does not know himself, he who does not know that eternal seed of wisdom of life in the transcendental area of consciousness, ... what can the expression of law, do for him? This (is the) eternal expression of law—'know the home of all the laws of nature which is in your own Self; if you do not know that, what can the expression of law do for you?' (Maharishi, 1977, p. 25).

When we view the natural law theories presented above, we find that they are not based on a simple extrapolation from scientific knowledge, but rather assume an underlying "substance" or ground state of nature. Experience of this ground state of nature transcends the duality of subject and object; it involves a sense of unity between the knower and the known (Kohlberg and Power, 1981).

This unity implies that moral positions are constructed on the basis of personal experience, pertaining to a cosmic perspective, which results in a reorganization of one's relationship to his/her environment. It also assumes that reality is lawful and is in harmony with humanity's most highly developed notions of love and justice.
We see the distinction between natural law theory, which posits the centrality of autonomous personal experience and divine command theory which relies upon external authority figures for ultimate guidance. Divine command theory assumes that there is no autonomy of morality or moral discourse since all moral decisions can be derived from rules or laws already laid down. The above theories of natural law put experience of a cosmic perspective on a higher ground upon which individuals can view life in a more comprehensive and integrated way in order to promote growth for oneself and society.

STAGE 7, THE TM AND TM-SIDHI PROGRAM, AND EEG COHERENCE

The kind of experience Kohlberg envisages as providing solutions to such Stage 7 questions as "Why be moral?" has been widely documented through research on the TM and TM-Sidhi program (Orme-Johnson and Farrow, 1977). The TM technique is defined as turning the attention inwards toward the subter levels of thought until the mind arrives at the source of thought (Maharishi, 1969). This source of thought, termed "pure consciousness," is experienced as a state of least excitation of consciousness and contains the properties of unbounded, nonlocalized, wholeness of awareness (Domash, 1977). The purpose of the TM-Sidhi program is to culture the ability of the individual to consciously entertain intentions while established in the state of pure consciousness (Maharishi, 1978). The practice of the TM-Sidhi program, derived from the ancient formulas of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, is predicted to produce the enlivening of human traits such as compassion and friendliness along with abilities which have commonly been thought of as beyond the range of human experience.

Since 1970, researchers at Maharishi International University in Fairfield, Iowa and Maharishi European Research University in Seelisberg, Switzerland have been investigating the psychophysiological correlates of the experience of pure consciousness (Orme-Johnson and Farrow, 1977). One measure which appears to be particularly sensitive to changes in states of consciousness is EEG brainwave coherence (Orme-Johnson, 1977), which measures the correlation of two signals as a function of frequency, together with associated cross-phase spectra (Beaumont, Mayes, and Rugg, 1978). EEG coherence can be understood as a measure of long-range order among widely separated brain cells (Domash, 1977). In addition to the studies on the TM program, EEG coherence data have been used for clinical diagnosis (e.g. Sklar, Hanley, and Simons, 1972), to study waking and sleep phases (e.g. Dumermuth, Walz, Scollo-Lavizzari, and Kleiner, 1972), and to investigate hemispheric information processing (e.g. Beaumont, Mayes, and Rugg, 1978).

Psychophysiological research on the TM and TM-Sidhi program has found a significant relationship among frontal EEG alpha coherence, creativity, and subjective reports of the clarity of experiences of pure consciousness (Orme-Johnson and Hanayes, 1981). Farrow (1977) found that reported experiences of unbounded awareness during the practice of the TM technique, denoted by the subject's press of a button immediately after its occurrence, were characterized by high EEG coherence in the alpha and theta bands and periodic suspension of respiration. Also, Levine (1976) and Dillbeck and Bronson (1981) found increases in bilateral frontal EEG alpha coherence as a result of the practice of the TM technique.

An exploratory study by Nidich et al. (1982) on Kohlbergian Stage 7 responses to the question, "Why be moral?" found that subjects scored as Stage 7 candidates exhibited higher EEG frontal alpha coherence than subjects scored as non-Stage 7 subjects ($t = 2.89, p < .01$). All of the subjects in the study were practicing the TM program or the TM and TM-Sidhi program. Statistical analysis, controlling for age, academic performance, and knowledge of Maharishi's theory of the Science of Creative Intelligence (SCI), the science of consciousness examining the source, course, and goal of creative intelligence and natural law, showed that the difference in cosmic and noncosmic responses was not due to differences in the theoretical understanding of SCI, but was directly related to the differential coherent functioning of the frontal lobes of the brain, which has been found to reflect greater clarity of experience of this holistic, unbounded state of consciousness (Orme-Johnson and Hanayes, 1981). In addition,

1. An example of a response scored as Stage 7 is given below:
   To be moral is to do what is maximally useful for oneself and one's world. Individual purpose is fulfilled at the same time that the purpose of society and the world is enhanced. Creation of all that which is evolutionary is through action in accord with the laws and purposes of the universe. This is morality. (Nidich et al., 1982)
Nidich et al. (1982) found that right intrahemispheric alpha coherence was positively correlated with Rest's (1974) Principled Thinking Scale ($r_s = .46, p < .05$), indicating that different regions of the brain are associated with Stage 7 thinking and principled moral reasoning.

The above results indicate that there are psychophysiological correlates to the natural law perspective described by the theorists in the first section of this paper. Rather than viewing development to a Stage 7, natural law perspective as resulting from philosophic reflection or speculation (see Kohlberg and Power, 1981), the research cited above suggests that one can have a direct experience of this cosmic level of life, which is associated with higher EEG frontal alpha coherence. Future research is encouraged to investigate further psychophysiological and biochemical correlates associated with a natural law, cosmic perspective.

**COSMIC PERSPECTIVE DEVELOPMENT AND THE TM AND TM-SIDHl PROGRAM**

Prior studies on the TM and TM-Sidhi program indicate that the TM program facilitates cognitive development in the direction of a natural law, cosmic perspective. Nidich (1977) found that college students who practiced the TM program exhibited higher levels of moral reasoning than students who were not practicing the TM program. Alexander (1982) found that inmates who began the practice of the TM program showed a significant increase in ego development, as measured by Loevinger's scale, when compared with inmates practicing other programs. Advanced participants in the TM program showed significant growth in ego development, as measured by Loevinger's scale, when compared with inmates practicing other programs. Advanced participants in the TM program showed significant growth in ego development, as measured by Loevinger's scale, when compared with inmates practicing other programs.

In addition to these studies, thousands of personal reports of experiences of higher states of consciousness by participants practicing the TM and TM-Sidhi program have been compiled by researchers at Maharishi European Research University. The following are examples of reported experiences obtained from individuals on a course in Europe, designed to teach the TM-Sidhi program and stabilize the experience of pure consciousness:

My experience in meditation at the beginning of my course was basically that of 'sitting' on the ground state of awareness, the state of least excitation. I was experiencing deep, wonderful silence, and having my first clear experience of being in such an unbounded, infinitely orderly and harmonious state of awareness, that an impulse in my awareness seemed to be instantly connected with all of creation. When I say 'instantly' connected with creation, I mean that there was no time value separating me from any part of creation. I was also beginning to feel my first thrills of the Absolute, faint impulses within the unmanifest, like stirring the water in a warm bath. Unboundedness was becoming a physical sensation—body as well as consciousness seemed without boundaries.

Meditations continued to become more and more profound. Meditation was filled with light and bliss.... I felt the whole universe was my Self....

I now find my individual interests have broadened to include universal interests—my awareness has expanded to such a degree that I can undertake world-wide desires and responsibilities. Naturally, I still have concern for my individual affairs, but the ideas and projects that really interest and inspire me these days are ones that extend to all mankind (C.P.).

I am perceiving finer and finer values of bliss and beauty, and feeling part of a whole beautiful plan. How small the individuality is, yet how powerful with the growing value of all-encompassing wholeness. The body is perceived as a tiny boundary which the Self flows in and out of (D.S.).

I feel a very solid stability and invincible strength growing in my life. I do not ever remember feeling so uncompromisingly complete and confident about myself and the direction my life is taking. My favorite companion is the bliss and silence of my Self (M.H.). (Creating an ideal society, 1976)

Other studies on the group dynamics of collective consciousness indicate that consciousness is a field and that relatively small groups of individuals collectively practicing the TM and TM-Sidhi program and experiencing this least excited state of human awareness can positively influence their environment. Dillbeck (1981) showed significant correlations be-
between decreasing crime trend and percentage of TM participants in a city, controlling for variables known to affect crime. In addition, Dillbeck conducted a cross-lagged panel analysis which consistently supported the interpretation of a causal influence of the TM program on crime rate reduction. Orme-Johnson and Dillbeck (in press) documented a shift from hostilities towards peace in five trouble-spot countries around the world during a ten-week period in which groups of 100 or more were flown into the various areas to participate collectively in the TM-Sidhi program. These studies lend support to the Maharishi Effect, which states that one percent of a population practicing the TM program can positively affect the trends of society, and the Super Radiance Effect, which states that only the square root of one percent of the population practicing the TM-Sidhi program is needed to create a higher degree of coherence in society. (The formulas for these effects were originally derived from principles of physics, e.g., the principle behind the production of coherent laser light.)

Orme-Johnson et al. (1982) investigated the field effect of consciousness by monitoring the EEGs of three subjects in Fairfield, Iowa, during control and experimental days, coinciding with 2500 students participating in the TM-Sidhi program at a course in Amherst, Massachusetts over 1000 miles away. Coherence between subjects was found to significantly increase from baseline to experimental periods on experimental days compared to control days, supporting the notion that consciousness is a field and is "essentially and manifestly wave mechanical in nature" (Domash, 1977, p. 658).

These studies indicate that the TM and TM-Sidhi program enhances development both on the individual and societal levels. In terms of individual development, the above studies on cognitive development and the personal reports of participants in the TM and TM-Sidhi program suggest that the practice of the TM and TM-Sidhi program facilitates development to a natural law, cosmic perspective. Future studies are encouraged to use Fowler's faith stage interview2 (see Shulik and Kohlberg, 1981) in order to assess generalized cosmic perspective development in persons practicing the TM and TM-Sidhi program. Even though research on collective consciousness is a relatively new field, the initial results are quite striking and warrant additional study in the context of studying moral atmosphere in schools and society as a whole.

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