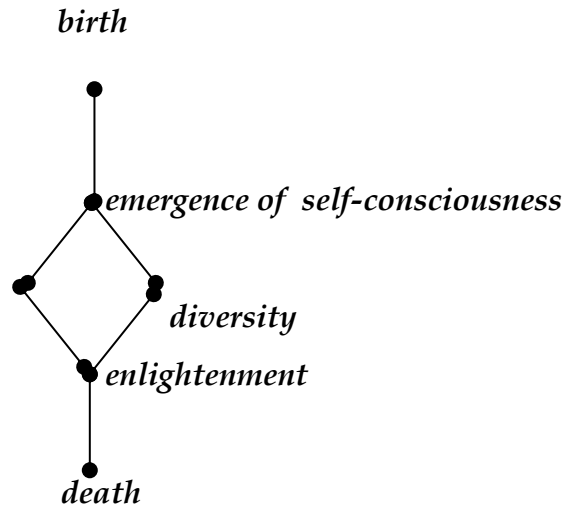


The six-element Stone lattice representing stages in the development of consciousness



This lattice is drawn with the passage of time intentionally heading downwards and death as its bottom element because death, itself the sole exception, is the negation of each stage of consciousness. Birth triumphs, at least in a formal sense, because it is the negation of future death. The stage of birth furnishes the conditions necessary for the emergence of self-consciousness without which the whole structure would quickly collapse into the trivial two element lattice {birth, death}. While it is surely the case that, *sub specie aeternitatis*, nothing more exists (one is born, then one dies), nevertheless the emergent self-consciousness, which has no choice but to bow to the tyranny of the linearity of time, eagerly applies the balm of diversity provided by its own imagination, at the same time gratefully acknowledging the existence of other minds, the recognition of whose reciprocal existence has been granted to it as a reprieve from that very tyranny. The few stages of diversity then represent, through the granting of a temporary reprieve from time's remorseless linearity, the liberation of the unfolding of one's own consciousness. The stage of enlightenment is an *envoi*, an acceptance that one is headed for the final stage, the endgame preceding the extinction of consciousness, yet accompanied with the idea - available to us all (for better or worse) - that one has lived.