Towards Integrality
Gebserian Reflections on
Education and Consciousness

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Jean Gebser's speculations about the emergence of integral consciousness invite teachers to think and act positively in a world without certainties.

Jean Gebser's theory of the origin and structure of consciousness has rarely been applied in discussion of the theory and practice of teaching. Nevertheless, Gebser's work provides an immensely rich, illuminating and challenging perspective on consciousness and, by extension, on education. This paper represents an attempt to think some of Gebser's findings and speculations through to their implications for teachers.

A Transformed Continuity

In his preface to The Ever Present Origin (1985), Jean Gebser gives us the context for his research and speculation on the evolution of consciousness.

The crisis we are experiencing today is not just a European crisis, not a crisis of morals, economics, ideologies, politics or religion. It is not only prevalent in Europe and America but in Russia and the Far East as well. It is a crisis of the world and mankind such as has occurred previously only during pivotal junctures — junctures of decisive finality for life on earth and for the humanity subjected to them. The crisis of our times and of our world is in a process — at the moment autonomously — of complete transformation, and appears headed towards an event which, in our view can only be described as "global catastrophe." This event, understood in any but anthropocentric terms, will necessarily come about as a new constellation of planetary extent.

We must soberly face the fact that only a few decades separate us from that event. This span of time is determined by an increase in technological feasibility inversely proportional to man's sense of responsibility — that is, unless a new
factor were to emerge which would effectively overcome this menacing correlation. (Gebser 1985, xxvii)

The work which follows this preface is an exposition of this "new factor, this new possibility" as Gebser observed it — the possibility of "integrity and the present, the realization and the reality of origin and presence," an integrity which implies a transformed continuity where mankind and not man, the spiritual and not the spirit, origin and not the beginning, the present and not time, the whole and not the part become awareness and reality. It is the whole that is present in origin and originary in the present. (Gebser 1985, xxviii)

The two decades in which Gebser's observations and insights developed into a theory of this emerging "integrity" were not such as to give him romantic notions about humanity and its future. He had concrete experience of the dominance of a totalitarian ideology and a mass pathology which appeared to him to represent a regression to a primitive form of consciousness. (He fled from Germany to Spain in 1931, from Spain to France in 1936, and from France to Switzerland in 1939.) He does not present us with a romantic vision. What he does give us is documentation of an emerging "possibility," and a theory of consciousness and culture which is consistent with it. In the half century since he wrote this we have come considerably closer to catastrophe. But we can also find signs of an emerging integrity which might enable us to deal with the crisis. 1

Structures of Consciousness

In Gebser's model of structures of consciousness he distinguished between four discrete mutations 2 of consciousness: the archaic consciousness of primal human beings, the magical consciousness of the stone age, the mythical consciousness which developed after the ice ages, and the mental consciousness which emerged with the great classical civilizations and which has dominated European culture since the middle ages. 3 These evolitional mutations are fundamentally different ways of experiencing reality. The central premise of his work was that a new structure of consciousness was beginning to emerge in the twentieth century, a structure which he called integral consciousness.

While Gebser's major work, The Ever Present Origin, sets out these structures in evolutionary sequence, he did not wish to imply that they are historical developments leading to integral consciousness as the ultimate human achievement. He maintained rather that they are intertwined and ever-present, and that it is the dynamic interplay between them which constitutes culture. While he presents his theory as a theory of the evolution of consciousness, he is adamant that he is not doing so within a fantasy of historical "development" or "progress." Our tendency to think in such terms is an artefact of our dominant mental consciousness, in which our experience of time is linear and quantified. Rather, reality is an unfolding process, and the archaic, magic, mythical, mental, and emerging integral structures are all valid ways of apprehending it. In Gebser's understanding we are shaped and determined not only by the present and the past but by the future. Most significantly, all of the structures have both "efficient" and "deficient" forms and we have no basis for being romantic about either past or future. 4 We have no assurance that we will experience the emerging integral structure only in its "efficient" form.

Gebser's investigations and speculations were guided by two principles: latency and transparency. For Gebser, latency is "the demonstrable presence of the future" (Gebser 1985, 6). Each phase of evolution contains in itself the seeds of all subsequent ones. This is the principle that guides his investigation of previous and present forms of consciousness, seeking to uncover the trajectory which might enable him to make sense of emerging phenomena. He describes transparency as "the form of manifestation of the spiritual" (Gebser 1985, 6). In his understanding, the "ever-present origin" from which everything springs is a spiritual one, and the various mutations are more or less efficient ways of apprehending it. The mental structure, now in its deficient rational-technocratic phase, has attained the limits of its possibilities. This opens up the possibility of another mutation, as a consequence of which the spiritual can be perceived as the energy which projects itself
transparently throughout the whole. This possibility already exists in us, in a more or less latent form.

Gebser understood the dominant structure of consciousness in European civilization since the enlightenment to be not the supreme achievement in human development but rather the deficient form of the mental structure which emerged about three thousand years ago. He saw the deficiency in the rational consciousness of the past four centuries as deriving from its arrogant devaluation and suppression of the earlier structures. In the apparent collapse of this structure in the twentieth century he saw both the danger of slipping back into a deficient magical-mythical structure and the promise of evolution to a new structure. The unwillingness of the rational-scientific civilization to acknowledge the validity of more primitive structures in no way makes them go away. The past structures are still present in us. We still think magically and mythically as well as rationally, whether we acknowledge it or not. We may be inclined to equate consciousness with the sense of self we experience at the mental level, yet we constantly shift between this mental-rational consciousness and the less complex structures on which it is built.

In Gebser’s model, our contemporary consciousness is multi-structured or, to change the metaphor, multi-layered. We may thank Freud and Jung for pointing out to us that even when we are acting “rationally,” our magical and mythical consciousness is hard at work. The complexity of human behavior comes out of the interplay of these several “layers” or “levels” of consciousness in whatever we do. From the point of view of rational-scientific culture, magical and mythical thinking are primitive and inferior forms of thinking which have limited value in the contemporary world. However, we can argue that it is our capacity for mythical, and even magical, thinking that enables us to find meaning in our lives and gives us a grounding in the concrete world (both human and nonhuman), which rational thinking seems bent on destroying. Magical and mythical consciousness are neither better nor worse than mental-rational consciousness. They are simply older and different. Re-owning and re-valuing them is a necessary step towards their integration in a new structure.

The Archaic Ground of Consciousness

Archaic consciousness can hardly be called consciousness at all. It is a state in which the individual is only minimally aware of self as separate from environment, a state of undifferentiated unity with all that is, controlled by instinct and having no sense of either past or future. A fundamental characteristic of this earliest modality of consciousness is its dimness. Gebser speaks of “identity,” the undifferentiated unity with all that is, as its essential feature. We still slip back into our archaic, undifferentiated unity-consciousness in deep sleep, or enter it voluntarily or involuntarily through trance, drugs, or certain kinds of meditation. Julian Jaynes argues at length that humans have been unconscious for most of their time on the planet, and that most of our experience is still unconscious. Certainly, a great deal of our behavior is automatic and unconscious, and we seem to be able to do quite complicated things without any awareness of doing them. Neumann, in discussing the original “uroboric” state of primal human beings, argues that unconsciousness is our “natural state.”

One has no need to desire to remain unconscious; on the contrary, one is primarily unconscious and can at most conquer the original situation in which man [sic] drowses in the world, drowses in the unconscious, contained in the infinite like fish in the environing sea. (Neumann 1973, 16)

The unity-sense of the archaic structure is suppressed by our rational consciousness, but persists nevertheless, manifesting itself in deficient forms as individuals seek to regain their primal unconscious state through awareness-diminishing drugs or by dissolving their ego-boundaries in group behavior.

Wilfred Bion’s observations of the ways groups function suggested to him that individuals in groups are constantly seeking to regain within the group their infantile relationship with mother. For Bion and the group relations theorists, this explains the irrational and emotional behavior we observe as the group frustrates the need of its members to experience mothering warmth, comfort, and security. Gebser, Jung, and Neumann suggest rather that in explaining such apparently regressive behavior we should look beyond the individual’s attachment and
separation from uterus and breast to the experience of the species losing its primal "participation mystique" in the life of Mother Earth herself. Where Bion and his school depict the regressive, infantile attachment to the Mother in largely pejorative terms, contrasting it with the "real work" which groups can perform when they suppress it, Gebser and Jung see this attachment to Nature as the source of strength and creativity.

In classrooms, whether of children, adolescents, or adults, the archaic structure of consciousness is overlaid by the magical, mythical, and mental structures. Yet, the archaic structure provides the ground of group experience. Following Gebser, we might argue that the natural basis of group life is our "oneness" not only with each other but with the earth itself. Gebser argues that our very capacity for empathy is grounded in our essential oneness not only with the species but with the world and universe. Where mental-rational consciousness constructs us as individuals, and separates self from other, so that empathy with another person involves a conceptual leap, archaic consciousness knows no such boundaries, either between one individual and another or between humans and the non-human world. Our capacity to understand one another, feel for one another, love one another, and identify with one another is grounded in archaic consciousness, which knows nothing of authority structures; goals; roles, reason; ethics; personal, tribal, or species boundaries; or even verbal language.

The archaic structure of consciousness is profoundly passive. The world of archaic consciousness is a world where "things happen" without any understanding or control by human beings. We can detect the drag of the primordial archaic consciousness in the inertia of collective habit and fixed ideas, and in the stress experienced by those who begin to doubt the basic, unstated, unreflected assumptions of group or culture. However, following Gebser, the archaic structure of consciousness contains the seeds not only of the magical structure which emerges from it directly, but of the integral structure which is currently emerging.

Magic

Magic consciousness has no sense of personal self. The individual has no existence except as member of a clan. And the clan does not separate itself from nature. The clan exists in a world where everything is connected to everything else, where there is no notion of logical cause and effect. The clan participates in the life of this world and deals with its dangers through magic and ritual. In our contemporary clans we are still doing this, though we generally cover it up with all sorts of rationalizations. Underneath the contemporary education system or institution's rationally stated policies and strategies and decisions, there is a "groupthink" which tends to respond to the world in the same way our stone age ancestors did — through magic.

Gebser's speculations about mutations of consciousness were stimulated by his experience of Nazism in Germany and Fascism in Italy and Spain in the thirties and forties. It appeared to him then that Europe as a whole was regressing to a primitive magic consciousness in which individuals gave up their personal identity in return for participation in a group identity, a situation which was maintained and reinforced through ritual, taboo, and incantation. In recent years we have been witnessing the same phenomenon repeated again and again where the breakdown of an imposed patriarchal political structure has opened the way for a return to tribalism. The magic structure is evident also in the personal regression we refer to as psychosis. However, the magic structure is not manifested only in spectacular group or individual pathology. The inability of the magical structure to distinguish between the whole and the part, between similarity and identity, or between self and group is the basis of much of the pathology of everyday life. The "ordinary" psychological phenomena of projection, transference, and inflation are readily explained in terms of the magic structure.

It would be a distortion of Gebser's thinking to associate contemporary manifestations of the magic structure only with pathology. It is predictable that where the magic structure is energetically suppressed by a culture it might appear in its "deficient" form when the mechanisms for controlling it are in-
adequate. However, the magic structure also has its "efficient" form.

One aspect of magic consciousness observed by Gebser is what we might call "psychic giftedness." Phenomena which we now call "paranormal" are common in cultures in which the magic structure has not yet been suppressed. So also are effective magic techniques of healing. For Gebser, such phenomena as telepathy, clairvoyance, and synchronicity are explainable in terms of the magic structure's timelessness and spacelessness, and its lack of boundary between self and other.

This argument also provides an explanation for our capacity to know "in our bones" what is being experienced by another, without direct communication or conscious processing. It is a capacity which appears to be most obvious in people closely connected physically, as in mothers and infants, or identical twins, but it is also commonly reported in other intimate relationships, as between lovers, or between therapists and their clients, or in intense group experiences, or, for that matter, between people and animals. Our ability to communicate symbolically makes us less dependent on such empathic identification as we grow older, and we presumably learn to ignore such somatic signals unless a particularly powerful or unusual experience brings them to our attention.

In a culture where primary groups have largely disappeared (except for the family, which is itself under the threat of disintegration) people still experience a primal urge to seek group membership, and largely find it in institutions such as schools, which are actually designed for quite other purposes than for simply giving people a group to belong to. In such institutions, no matter how "rationally" structured, we find responses to people's need to be bound emotionally to a group and participate in its rituals. The "closedness" of a school or classroom, the development of clear distinctions between those who belong and those who do not, the distrust of or antagonism towards strangers, the strong notions of correct behavior, the taboos, the punishments meted out to those who offend against usage and custom, are as manifest here as in the stone age clan or the medieval village. In schools as in other institutions of an apparently rational culture, group identity is maintained and reinforced by such magic means as the wearing of uniforms, the chanting of incantations, the worship of icons, the ritualization of behavior, and the casting of spells and curses. And, often enough, the magic works. Ritual successfully controls instinct and impulse which might cause the community to fragment. All this, of course, takes place in an individualistic, rationalistic school culture which largely denies the influence of the magic structure and the pull of collective consciousness. Being intellectually sophisticated people, we have perfectly good and logical explanations for taking our courses of action, no matter how irrational or superstitious they may actually be.

In our magical consciousness we are not initiators of our behavior, but controlled by external forces which we must use magic to keep in check. If something terrible happens in a magical community it is because someone has broken a taboo, and it is of no significance whether the infringement was conscious or not. The magical structure is deeply conservative. Magic tends to be used to keep things the way they have always been, rather than to change things. Many of the rules and procedures which are taken for granted in schools or classrooms are maintained simply because this is the way we've always done it. Sometimes the situation that the procedure was designed to deal with has long ago changed, but the procedure is still followed because it provides the security of magical ritual. Suggestions for trivial changes (e.g., allowing children to address teachers by their given names, breaking a dress code, changing the time of an annual ritual event) are met with irrational resistance. We've done it this way for thirty years and we've always been OK; if we stop doing it, something terrible will happen!

The individualistic thrust of conventional education in Western democracies insures that the magic clan-based structure is largely suppressed. If the culture of the classroom is such that the drive to belong goes unattended, it becomes vulnerable to a takeover by a regressive magic consciousness. As "productivity" considerations push schools to become larger and more impersonal we should not be surprised if we find children's and adolescents' primitive response to separation manifested in collective panic, fear, or rage.
Magical behavior was a perfectly adequate way of dealing with the world in primal communities, and there are still aspects of our experience that we deal with through our magical consciousness. Technology, the conventional magic of our era, has transformative power attributed to it. The power of group religious ritual to heal and transform, and the success of diverse alternative therapies attest to magical consciousness being a valid response to the world. (We can argue plausibly enough that conventional medicine also depends largely on the magic structure for its efficacy.) And because we can bring our rational consciousness to bear on our more primitive ways of behaving, we can have some control over them. We can create rituals to express commitment to a common enterprise or to shared values, and this ritualizing can create or transmute energy for a specific end. We can invest particular icons with the power to express our identity and the meaning of our group activity.

Of course, if we start reflecting on, explaining, or manipulating icons we have moved beyond magic consciousness. In magical consciousness there is a complete interweaving with nature, no self-reflection, and only a rudimentary separation of subject and object. Such a separation, which is a characteristic of mental consciousness, begins to develop in the mythical structure.

**Myth**

Where archaic consciousness experiences undifferentiated oneness, and magic consciousness experiences a world where all things are connected, mythical consciousness experiences the world as numinous.

Mircea Eliade describes the world of pre-rational humans as one in which everything has happened already in the lives of the gods in the beginning. Because every human act repeats and imitates the primordial acts of the gods, every human act participates in the sacred:

Rituals and significant profane gestures ... acquire the meaning attributed to them, and materialize that meaning, only because they deliberately repeat such and such acts posited ab origine by gods, heroes or ancestors. (Eliade 1991, 5)

If this was so in mythical consciousness, as Gebser would also argue it was, the behavior of human beings was not only numinous but determined. They lived their lives embedded in the stories of the gods, which were played out over and over again. Their connection with this primordial world is through imagination, just as magic humans connected to the world through emotion and archaic humans did so through instinct and presentiment. Whereas in the magic structure of consciousness humans were entirely interlaced with nature, mythical consciousness is distinguished by an emergent awareness of soul, that is, of a psychic dimension of life.

To be in mythical consciousness is to be enmeshed in a particular way of imagining the world, to be enmeshed in a story, and the stories we are enmeshed in are the collective stories, the "big" stories, of our tribe. From the standpoint of our rational consciousness we are inclined to see story and images as something we have, something that is in us. In our mythical consciousness it is we who are in the story, a story which is constantly repeated. Mythical consciousness, as Gebser and Eliade describe it, has no sense of measured, sequential time. Time is rhythmic, always returning to its beginning. It was only with the development of mental consciousness that history was invented.

As far as our mythical consciousness is concerned, the old stories are still true, and we are still in them. We are always in one archetypal fantasy or another. From the perspective of archetypal psychology as enunciated by James Hillman, the very notion that we are reasonable beings able to observe the world objectively, reflect on it rationally, and deal with it scientifically is simply one fantasy among many. This is a way of imagining the world, a story, a myth. It has been a dominant story in European culture for some time but, as stories go, it is relatively new.

Conventionally, schooling is embedded in such a fantasy. Learning is understood (or rather imagined) to be an intellectual process. Information is presented and remembered, problems are solved, concepts are comprehended within this fantasy of transcendent observation. However, the practice may be rather different. Effective teachers depend on imagination rather than "thinking" for the transmission and recall of information. They depend on their own
and their students’ imaginative empathy to enable understanding between themselves and their students as partners in dialogue. They depend on imagination to provide the vision which makes transformation possible.

Myths are powerful in shaping individual behavior. Both Freud and Jung pointed to specific scripts that we are predisposed to act out. We can argue that they are even more powerful in shaping group behavior. Gebser argued that it was in the very nature of the prerational mythical consciousness to be a group consciousness. We can now see readily enough that it is a shared story that shapes behavior in areas of intercultural or interethnic conflict. We can see how a shared story gives identity and meaning to a group of people, and how the conflict between two stories resists rational analysis and rational solutions. In the context of the classroom we need to be aware not only of the way in which particular unexamined narratives may shape our own behavior and that of our students, but how the whole enterprise of education has been enmeshed in an “old story.” For the past couple of centuries of the industrial era education has been dominated by the “Promethean” story, with its themes of technology, emancipation, individualism, and progress. It is this myth which has functioned as a vehicle for the dominant values and meanings which have characterized European culture of the modern era. But it is a myth that is becoming incongruent with our experience. During the past couple of decades of this century, the most loudly stated “truths” about education have increasingly belonged to the myth of Hermes — the god of boundaries, the god of thieves and liars, of the marketplace, of travellers, of information, and of change.

In a deficient rational culture, myth is dishonoured and suppressed. However, mythos manages to survive, disguised as logos. When we engage in what we habitually refer to as “thinking” about our consensus reality we are highly likely to be functioning within the mythical structure, living in an imaginal and personified universe which we simultaneously experience and deny. Our beliefs and our reflections on them are a rationalized mythology. Our thinking is collective, not individual, enmeshed as it is in the taken-for-grantedness of our tribal narratives. Much, perhaps most, of our thinking is what Robert Kegan (1994, 170f) calls “third order thinking.”

Kegan’s neo-Piagetian constructivist-developmental model of cognitive functioning has a number of points of contact with Gebser’s model. In Kegan’s model, adolescence marks the stage when schools and the broader culture demand of people that they become capable of the cognitive complexity which Kegan calls “cross-categorical” or “third order” thinking. The adolescent reaches this level of complexity by making a subject-object distinction not possible previously. In infancy (first order consciousness), subject and object were not differentiated. In later childhood (second order consciousness) the immediate perception moves from being the subject of experiencing to the object of experiencing. In early adolescence cross-categorical meaning-making (third order consciousness) becomes the subject which acts on the objects of experiencing. The adolescent can reason abstractly but cannot disidentify from her own reasoning. She lives within a set of truths and the narratives which embody them. She is capable of holding a coherent set of assumptions about life, a coherent disposition towards ultimate reality, but she is not capable of standing outside of it. Kegan’s focus here is on cognitive development, not imagination, but the kind of thinking he is talking about belongs to the mythical structure. It is not self-reflective or critical, and it is essentially collective. Third order thinking rationalizes a particular consensus view of reality, a particular way of imagining the world which is common to the family, tribe, or culture. To stand outside this narrative, the adolescent must “leave home”, and experience the isolation and exhilaration of “fourth order” thinking, that is, of the mental-rational structure.

Mind

While Kegan’s model is a developmental one, not an evolutionary one, he does make the occasional suggestion that the phenomenon he is writing about is not a purely individual one. He surmises, for instance, that the fourth order thinking demanded by the modern world is more common now than it was some generations ago. And his depiction of fourth order thinking is consistent with Gebser’s depiction of the mental-rational structure of consciousness that
is characteristic of modernity. Where mythical consciousness is embedded in the group, mental consciousness is specifically individual. Where mythical consciousness looks only to the past, mental consciousness is characterized by a purposeful looking to the future. Mental consciousness introduces another level of subject/object differentiation. I no longer identify with my thoughts, ideas, opinions, attitudes. They become something I have, not something I am. The function which enables these thoughts we call mind and distinguish from its opposite, matter.

Since Galileo and Descartes, European high culture has been content to define humanity within the rational (deficient mental) structure. Through this structure we perceive ourselves essentially as individuals. We have a sense of history as a sequence of events starting at a beginning and moving towards an end. We quantify both space and time. We find ourselves standing apart from an objectified world and acting upon it. We dichotomize our experience of the world in all sorts of ways: subject/object, self/other, true/false, matter/spirit, mind/body, good/bad, male/female, progression/regression. Our way of perceiving the world is shaped by an awareness of three-dimensional space, through the metaphors of hierarchy, perspective, quantity, scale, and progress. Whereas the mental consciousness of classical Athens or renaissance Florence combined conceptual thinking with a rich imaginative life, the rational-scientific age has seen the reduction of the universe from living organism to a collection of objects, the body from the temple of the soul to a piece of matter. It has seen the privileging of the intellect over other human capacities, the identification of intellect and spirit with the male, and the relegation of the devalued physical-emotional (magical) and imaginative-intuitive (mythical) to the female. And it is this dualistic and hierarchical thinking which has made possible the extraordinary achievements of science and technology and the imminent catastrophe towards which science and technology have led us.

Mental-rational consciousness is anthropocentric and egocentric. Man stepped out of his entanglement in the nonhuman world and learned to relate to it as an object out there to be explored and controlled. He escaped from engulfment by the taken-for-grantedness of tribe and myth and gloried in his consequent isolation. His sense of self separated subject-mind from object-body. In the full bloom of rational consciousness he arrogantly perceived himself to be the highest achievement of creation (whether creation was religiously or scientifically imagined), and assumed that his capacity to observe, measure, and categorize the world would in due course give him understanding and control of it.

The development of formalized and institutionalized education over four centuries of enlightenment has been based in these same assumptions. It came to be accepted without argument that schooling should be based on scientific principles, that is, it should be rational, objective, individualistic, and impersonal. In the context of schooling, community and relationship, if valued at all, have been valued instrumentally for their contribution to control and achievement. The success of technology in the nineteenth century made it inevitable that schools would come to be imagined as machines, designed to deliver designated products.

It is through our mental-rational structure of consciousness that we detach ourselves from the group consciousness and assert our separateness. Our individuality and our capacity to manipulate ideas are inextricably tied together in the mental structure of consciousness. The latent archaic structure predisposes us to lapse into an instinctual and unreflective oneness with the world. The magical structure predisposes us to be caught up in collective impulse and emotionality. The mythical structure gives our actions meaning and value by keeping us uncritically embedded in a narrative. The mental-rational structure makes us individuals and sets us free from the diminished responsibility attendant on the other structures.

The capacity and inclination for independent reflection and directed thought has been cherished by the science-dominated culture of the modern European era. However, this capacity is acknowledged only in the context of a single reality which is ultimately discoverable by thinking persons. Not only modern science, but modern organizations — educational, political and cultural — have been built upon the assumption that there is "one truth." The rational structure of consciousness is, in Gebser's language, "perspectival"; the egosubject must take a vantage
point from which to see the universe and accordingly sees it from one direction only. It has no possibility of observing the whole.

The deficient rational, perspectival consciousness of the modern era has led us to assume that the maintenance of order depends on the acknowledgment of a single reality. This assumption has been used to justify political and intellectual oppression for centuries. This assumption is still dominant in classrooms, schools, and education systems where difference is feared as a threat to order. Students are encouraged to think, and if they “think right” they will arrive at consensus truth and enjoy the order which depends on it; the alternative is chaos and disintegration. We must note, however, that in the students’ acceptance of culturally conserved truths the mythical structure will be more dominant than the mental. Under the threat of chaos and disintegration, which is the inevitable consequence of the deficient rational structure’s ongoing quantification and fragmentation of reality, we find a reversion to the simpler structures. We find avenues of escape to the warmth and security of archaic consciousness in the burgeoning drug culture. We find a proliferation of magical explanations of our predicament (e.g., magical “market mechanisms”), a search for magical solutions (to AIDS, to the environmental crisis, to overpopulation) and a magical glorification of power. We find a proliferation of rationalized mythologies in the various fundamentalisms — religious, economic, technological, ecological, racial, political — which declare that there is one truth and condemn all heresy as evil. Archaic identity, magical power, and mythical embeddedness offer salvation from the terrors of a dissolving mental consciousness structure.

Gebser’s observations of the dissolution of the mental consciousness structure and the emergence of a new structure in the mid twentieth century predated those of the analysts of modernity such as Lyotard, Baudrillard, and Derrida, who have observed that the consciousness of advanced capitalist culture of the late twentieth century is characterized by an unending flow of information, the exteriorization of knowledge, a global marketplace in which everything is commodified, the dissolution of the old orthodoxies and the relativization of value and belief, the abandonment of the heroic fantasy, the crisis of dualistic thinking, and the dominance of image in a world of chaos, paradox, indeterminacy, and discontinuity. While such a worldview appears to lead readily to nihilism, there are elements in it which parallel closely not only Gebser’s observations of the dissolution of the rational structure but also his speculations about an emergent structure of consciousness.

**Integrity**

Gebser suggests, logically enough, that just as magic humanity could not feel what the experience of mythical consciousness might be, and just as mythical humanity could not imagine what mental consciousness might be like, rational humanity cannot conceptualize the experience of the structure of consciousness which is at present emerging. Gebser himself claims only to have observed the past and present trajectory of consciousness and on this basis to have guessed at its future direction. The nature of his guess is implied in the label *integral* which he gave to this structure. Also, it is manifested in the methodology and presentation of his own researches on the subject, in which he attempts to transcend the limits of conventional scientific method and its privileging of quantified data and linear logic.

Gebser observed that not only were the magic and mythical modes of perceiving the world being once again being accepted as legitimate by the intellectual culture, but that the magical and mythical structures of consciousness were being integrated with rational consciousness to produce a totally new way of perceiving and thinking. It is central to Gebser’s understanding that all the structures are co-present in us, whether acknowledged or not. Moreover, the integral structure of consciousness, which is latent in all of us, is not merely the simultaneous and collaborative functioning of the four previous structures. It is an entirely new structure which enables us to apprehend not just the parts but the whole, a whole which is spiritual.

The grand and painful path of consciousness emergence, or, more appropriately, the unfolding and intensification of consciousness, manifests itself as an increasingly intense luminescence of the spiritual in man. (Gebser 1985, 542)
Our latent capacity to perceive the aperspectival,\textsuperscript{16} acategorical \textit{whole} depends on the integration of archaic presentiment, magic attunement, mythical image, and mental-rational concept in an act ofprehension which is not just a synthesis (which would be an exercise of mental-rational consciousness) but a \textit{synaeresis}.\textsuperscript{17}

Three elements stand out in Gebser's analysis of the integral structure.

The first is time-freedom. Archaic and magical humanity seem to have no sense of time at all. For mythical humanity, time is rhythmical, constantly returning to its beginning. For mental-rational humanity, time is continuous, sequential, and mechanically quantifiable. Integral consciousness is time-free. The re-integration of pre-rational, magic, timeless and irrational, mythical, temporality with mental, measured time “makes possible the leap into arational time-freedom.” (Gebser 1985, 288) “Time-freedom” is not timelessness. What Gebser observed was a new way of experiencing time, not as quantity but as intensity and quality.

The integral structure of consciousness also has a new sense of space. Archaic and magical humanity lack all spatial consciousness, because it lacks a defined sense of a self as observer. Mythical humanity has emerged from this enmeshment in nature, aware of an external world, but self-consciousness is still too weak to experience objective space. It is only through our mental consciousness that human beings are able to locate events in objective space. Central to this experience is perspective, which demands a point from which the world is viewed and an individual to view it. In the emergent, four-dimensional, integral consciousness, it becomes possible to view the world “aperspectivally,” without locating the viewer in a particular position in space. We are no longer constrained to see only the parts, but have access to the whole.

A third element in Gebser’s analysis is the ego. Archaic and magical consciousness are ego-less. Mythical consciousness holds only a vague sense of self as distinct from the clan. Mental-rational consciousness is dominated by ego. Integral consciousness is, in Gebser’s language, “ego-free.”

The integral structure does not displace the other modes of experiencing.

We would caution here that this does not imply some kind of attempt at spiritualizing the world apart from all reality. Every form of spiritualization is gained at the expense of renouncing or negating or suppressing the previous consciousness structures. But a truly integral perception cannot dispense with the foundation of the mental structure any more than the mental structure can dispense with the mythical, and the mythical with the magic, that is, if we are to be “whole” or integral human beings. We must, in other words, achieve the integral structure without forfeiting the efficient forms of the earlier structures. (Gebser 1985, 299)

On the other hand, it does not simply aggregate them. It exists as a new mode which dominates the others, just as the efficient mental structure does not abolish the mythical structure but rather subordinates it to a more complex mode of experiencing. Rationality, in the context of the integral is not fragmenting or reductive but contributes to our making sense of the space-free, time-free whole.\textsuperscript{18} Gebser is adamant that the emerging structure does not represent a higher consciousness but rather an \textit{intensification} of consciousness.

Gebser’s original insight into the emerging structure came through his discovery in the poetry of Rilke of a mode of experiencing which is no longer perspectival, dualistic and time-bound. He sought and found the same phenomenon in other European poets (notably Eliot and Valéry). From this point he set about his massive accumulation of evidence from other areas of the humanities and sciences, which convinced him that a specific cultural pattern had been emerging in the first half of the century. At century’s end we find both in the postmodern arts and sciences and in popular culture abundant evidence that this pattern has intensified.

There is rather more to Gebser’s speculations about the nature of the emerging structure of consciousness than this, but this is sufficient basis for some speculation on what form education can appropriately take in this context.

\textbf{Towards an Integral Education}

Gebser refers to education only once in \textit{The Ever Present Origin}, in the midst of a list of social sciences where we might, albeit with difficulty, find traces of
aperspectival reality (Gebser 1985, 425). He immediately drops the subject. It is not my intention here to trawl the writing of education theorists for traces of aperspectival reality, but rather to speculate on how classroom practice might be influenced by our taking Gebser's ideas seriously.

In this discussion there are certain questions which need to be addressed. The first is the question of maturation. Developmental theorists inform us that the child or adolescent's capacity for thought is stage-dependent. Is there any point in even considering integral consciousness in an educational context, when children and adolescents may not be capable of it? The second is the question of individual pedagogy. What difference does it make to teaching practice if we take seriously the multilevel awareness of the student and attempt to facilitate the integration of these levels? The third is the question of culture. How do we educate children in a world where the rational structure of consciousness is disintegrating and the integral structure is emerging?

Maturation

Theories of child and adolescent development offer some support for Gebser's model, and warn us that there is a sequence in human development which must be respected if teaching is to be effective. However, models of cognitive (Piaget), psychosexual (Freud), psychosocial (Erikson), and moral (Kohlberg) development are firmly rooted in the patriarchal assumptions of the deficient rational structure, which assumes hierarchy and uncritically privileges cognitive process over relationship, intuition, and feeling.

What happens if we detach ourselves from this notion and the myth of progress in which developmental psychology is embedded?

For one thing, we might imagine the child as an emergent, self-organizing, open system existing in an emergent, self-organizing universe. We might recognize the egocentric and anthropocentric assumptions of conventional education theory as mythically constellated and imagine the emergence of increasingly complex consciousness in the child as a manifestation of the emergence of increasingly complex consciousness not only in the species but in the universe.

In our teaching practice we might acknowledge that our notions of intelligence are socially and culturally constructed and learn to honor other constructions. Instead of imagining the conventionally sequenced developmental stages of childhood and adolescence as a series of hurdles to be jumped before progress to more complex functioning becomes possible, we might acknowledge the plurality of consciousness and appreciate both the promise and limitations of whatever mode of experiencing is dominant in the child at any time. We might imagine students whether children, adolescents and adults — as unfolding process. However, abandoning one myth and its rationalizations for another does not move us any closer to integrality. In our thinking about education we can abandon the heroic metaphors characteristic of ego-psychology or the mechanical metaphors characteristic of "old science" and adopt the organic metaphors more favored by "new science," but if that is all we do we will still be thinking only mythically and perspectivistically. If our thinking is to be in any degree integral, we must be able, on the one hand, to imagine education from within such a metaphor and construct a conceptual framework consistent with it, and, on the other hand, to relativize our ability to do this. We must engage in what Kegan calls "fifth order thinking." 22

Teaching the Whole Child

The notions of holistic education which we have inherited from humanistic psychology and the human potential movement focus on educating in a way which develops all the capacities of the child — intellectual, imaginative, emotional, physical, relational. Gebser's model provides a framework for constructing just this type of educational experience or for justifying its teaching practices.

Holistic educators are inclined to condemn the narrowness of a purely instrumental approach to teaching, and for good reason. But the conventional "humanistic" holism, focusing as it does on personal growth, is another such narrow perspective. If we must talk instrumentally, we can argue that effective teaching will call on the capacities of the archaic structure (e.g., through behavior modification, on the one hand, and trance, on the other), of the magic structure (e.g., through ritual, incantation, and spe-
cific magic techniques such as those developed in suggestopedia or neurolinguistic programming), of the mythical structure (e.g., through imaginal, dramatic and narrative techniques), and of the mental structure (e.g., through logically sequenced presentation and problem solving), of the integral structure (through the celebration of difference in persons and perspectives). We can also argue that efficient myth and magic in the school setting is only possible where the child’s magic/mythic need for group identity and empathic relationship is adequately met—something at odds with a trend to larger and more impersonal schools. We can argue that the best of teaching consists in “getting all this together.”

If we want to talk humanistically rather than instrumentally, we can argue within the Gebserian framework that education is essentially about developing the child’s capacities at every level, and that this is an end in itself. However, in thinking about the development of the child’s potential we should not be constrained by Western, modernist, heroic notions of ego-development. Jung, among others, has argued that the development in the individual of a strong ego is only a stage in psychological growth (a particular task of adolescence and young adulthood) rather than the goal of it. The dominance of ego as the controlling center of the personality belongs specifically to the mental-rational structure. The development of an egoic consciousness is assuredly a necessary foundation for the development of a transegoic consciousness, but it is not its only foundation. Integral consciousness depends also on assuring that the child does not lose his archaic, magical, and mythical identification with planet, species, and community. This pre-egoic identification is the foundation of the integral structure’s apprehension of the whole, and needs to be sustained and supported.

Postmodern theories of the self postulate that we have many selves, actual and potential, through which to express the fullness of our being, and that rigid identification with a single self is a significant obstacle to our becoming what we are capable of becoming. The unfolding of integral consciousness in children demands a classroom which encourages and honors plurality in children’s expressions of their “personality” and talents, in contrast to the increasingly narrow and instrumental vision of mainstream education.

However, integrality in education is not just a matter of facilitating the child’s becoming all that she is capable of becoming as an individual. In Gebser’s understanding this elicitation of integral consciousness inducts the child/adolescent/adult into awareness of a transparent whole.

The Integral Classroom

Both contemporary science and postmodern social analysis have challenged the feasibility of assuming any longer that there is a single reality. Gebser and contemporary constructive postmodernists such as Capra, Griffin, and Kegan challenge the assumption that order depends on believing in it.

Integral consciousness is, to reiterate one of Gebser’s key expressions, a perspectival. It is space-free. It does not locate itself (physically or metaphorically) on a particular spot and see the world from there. It sees the world from no spot in particular and from all possible spots at once. This may be beyond most of us most of the time; it is certainly beyond most institutions. However, there are signs of the emergence of at least a multi-perspectival vision.

The variety of educational practice has its roots in a variety of educational philosophies which are, in the main, rationalizations of a variety of myths. The meaning, purpose, and value of education cannot be separated from the mythical structure and the personified universe it experiences. When we have a vision of what education can or ought to be, our vision is shaped by the root metaphors which constellate mythical consciousness in European culture. The loudest voices in the rhetoric of education are currently proclaiming a myth of commodification which announces itself to be the only truth. There appears to be a consensus among politicians regardless of their party affiliation that education is nothing but a commodity whose only value is the value given it by the marketplace. Such an assumption is firmly embedded in the myth of Hermes, god of the marketplace. However, this is not the only narrative in contemporary education. We do not have to look far to find classrooms where educational theory and practice are still constructed according to the values of Prometheus (science, progress), Father-Zeus (tradi-
tion, authority), or his son Apollo (order, understanding). When we look a little farther we may find also the worship of Mother-Demeter (nurture, growth) or Dionysos (spontaneity, creativity), or Eros (love, community), or Hephastos (craft, work), or Ares (conflict, competition), or Aphrodite (beauty), or Artemis (Nature), or Athena (democracy, common sense), or Hera (social stability). In many classrooms there is more than one god worshipped. Unfortunately, in many places some of these gods must be worshipped in secret.

The multiperspectival, pluralistic (or polytheistic) classroom worships all the gods equally. It can simultaneously embrace different perspectives and different value systems and tolerate the tensions in this embrace. It has moved away from the perspectival rational consciousness that holds only one truth about education and argues that there must be one internally consistent set of values. This is a necessary step towards an aperspectival consciousness where the one/many duality is transcended and education is focused on the transparency of the whole.

One of the key features of integral consciousness as Gebser imagines it is this transcendence of the dualism that is at the core of rational thinking. Twentieth century science has led inexorably to the conclusion that the rules of rational, dualistic thinking which have been so useful for us in the past may not be universally applicable. Gebser warns us against assuming that the only alternative to rational thinking is irrationality. Integral consciousness is not irrational but arational. We are familiar with the kind of thinking and practice in education that assumes that a focus on tradition and a focus on innovation are incompatible, that there must be a choice between attention to content and attention to process, between order and chaos, between self-interest and altruism, between efficiency and compassion, between cooperation and competition, between humanity and technology (between Apollo and Dionysos, Athena and Ares, Hera and Herakles, Demeter, and Zeus). Such ways of thinking were useful once, but they have outlived their usefulness. In the "proto-integral" classroom difference is valued. The fantasy that "objective truth" has been revealed to the mainstream culture and accordingly must be imposed on all who enter it is diminishing, as is the power to impose it. In the classroom itself, the magical and mythical structures are forcing themselves on our attention.

We might mention in this connection the impact of multi-culturalism on the schooling culture of the advanced Western democracies. Schools are being forced to adapt to a shift in student population as they incorporate children from ethnic groups in whom the magic and mythical structures of consciousness have not been entirely dominated by a deficient rational structure. Schools are increasingly confronted with a population of students and parents whose culture is oral and communitarian and whose basic assumptions about the meaning and purpose of education are at odds with the individualistic, ego-centered, competitive assumptions and print-centered practices which have conventionally shaped mainstream education. Teachers find their classes filled with students whose habitual modes of thought are imaginal and narrative rather than conceptual, and who do not make the binary distinctions between self and other, fact and image, public and private, truth and error, mind and matter, which have given conventional classrooms their peculiar character. Educators may react to such a situation by asserting their notion of a proper education and marginalizing those students who do not "measure up" to it. Or they may take refuge in radical scepticism and give up on truth altogether. Or they may be tolerant of other people's truths (while preferring their own) and adapt schooling to accommodate them. Or they may be prepared (and able) to relativize their own truths, even to relativize systemic knowing. This demands an ability to perceive not only "my truth" and "your truth" as both incomplete without the other, but even "me" and "you" as incomplete without the other.

We now find ourselves dealing with a school population which has been subjected from infancy to a flood of information and a flood of images in a way which has not been experienced by any other generation. This information and imagery comes through the popular media with no apparent distinction made between fact and fiction or between the significant and the trivial. We also find a broad popular movement (of which "new age" rhetoric is only a symptom) that is convinced of the inability of rationality to solve the personal and global predicament,
and seeks solutions in efficient and deficient forms of magic. It would be surprising if this movement made no impact on young people's learning. From the perspective of the dominant rational consciousness, this shift is regressive. "Children," we hear, "cannot think any more." And it may indeed be regressive. It would not be the first time in human history that the mental structure fragmented and dissolved. On the other hand, we can find in the same phenomena signs that a latent integral structure is emerging.

An integral education is time-free. It is not locked into a particular spot in history, a particular mark on a time line. In an integral education the past and the future are simultaneously experienced with the present. Time can now be stretched or compressed, and it has become possible to talk of the quality and intensity of time as well as its extent. The school is not locked into its history or its traditional ways of categorizing people and events which are a product of both mythical consciousness (through shared narratives) and rational consciousness (through history). Among the products of myth and history in a school are essentialist views of race, gender, class, and cultural difference, including an essentialist view of its own identity. The integral school is no longer trapped in historically-based assumptions about people — assumptions that particular groups of people have particular traits and accordingly are suitable only to fill particular roles. It does not have to limit its students' activities on the basis that they are essentially such and such because of race or gender or geography. It does not have to limit its collective activity because of an essentialist view of what it is and what it does. It no longer protects itself from accepting students or teachers who will not "fit in" because of cultural difference. It is difference which gives the school the capacity to "go with the flow" through ongoing self-organization, and it is contradiction which nourishes the complexity it values. Where the rational school seeks conformity, stability, and planned change, the integral school values the multiplicity, creativity, and spontaneity which come with time-freedom. It is not just a matter of tolerating differences from a position of superiority. Integrality demands that difference itself be valued. Difference is an essential component of the whole.

The integral classroom is space-free. Gebser developed his notions of what integral consciousness might be like without being witness to the developments in communications and information technology which are peculiar to the present time. Yet these are highly significant for the intellectual sensibility of a postmodern world and the functioning of educational institutions within it. The integral school does not get stuck as some do in the magical and mythical aspects of information technology, but pays attention to the changes in children's awareness which come with the disappearance of distance, the disappearance of ancient boundaries, and the globalization of consciousness. It seems likely that the deficiency as well as efficiency of integral consciousness will be manifest in the ways in which we interact with and through this technology.

Integral education is not constrained by the limitations of the heroic ego. Not only do we seem to be abandoning the notion that the ego is the center of the personality, but it is becoming increasingly difficult to place human beings at the center of the universe, or even to maintain that they are at the center of the planet. It is becoming incumbent on us to relativize ourselves, to imagine ourselves not only as choosing and acting individuals in our own right but also both as an environment for smaller organisms and as cells of a larger organism. The boundaries of our selves are not as impermeable as they used to be.

For a deep ecologist like Warwick Fox, the "self" is identified with "all that is," in a "deep realization that we and all other entities are aspects of a single unfolding reality" (1990, 250). He is careful to point out that this realization does not imply that all multiplicity and diversity is reduced to homogeneous mush, but rather "the fact that we and all other entities are aspects of a single unfolding reality means neither that all entities are fundamentally the same nor that they are absolutely autonomous, but rather simply that they are relatively autonomous" (Fox 1990, 250). Once we relativise the atomistic individualism which has characterised conventional modernist understandings of education we may see the development of unity-consciousness as a desirable aim for education and teach our students to experience it. We may become aware of the condition of the world (human and non-human) being projected in the be-
behavior of our students. We may view the apathy or aggression of our students as an expression of the pathology of the world rather than solely as expressions of their own inadequate functioning. We may teach them to listen to the voices of the earth and take them seriously. We may give up the notion that their inability to learn and to adapt creatively to their world is a function of personal pathology or inadequacy (or of social and environmental demands), and imagine rather that it is connected to our damaged relationship to nature. We may see that an essential aspect of our task as teachers, whatever the content of our teaching, is to connect our students to the resources and rhythms of the natural world. We may acknowledge that we and our students are deeply implicated in Nature and that their emergence as whole, individuated, mindful human beings must be grounded in their identification with all that is. Not to return to our dimly experienced symbiotic union with the all-encompassing mother, but to regain an experienced identification with all that is which, if sensed emotionally (magically), imaginally (mythically) and conceptually (mentally), may be integrated in a new connection to the ground of our being.

**Living on the Border**

This kind of thinking about our place in the universe, even when it does not reach conscious expression, affects the way we think about organizations such as schools. It demands that education institutions see themselves and structure themselves in ways which are consistent with a sense of themselves as open systems in a web of relationships which blur the boundaries between inside and outside. Integral consciousness constructs no mythical boundary between us and them, and no rational boundary between I and it.

Some of us do not particularly like this development. In the condition of liminality and doubt in which we find ourselves, we have a tendency to reach for old certainties, old solutions. Unfortunately, it is old certainties and old solutions which have got us into the position we are in. There is a tendency for alternative education institutions to reinforce the barrier between us and them rather than dismantle it, to seek the security of an internally cohesive mythology rather than relativize it in a world without certainties. Maybe we have to accept that liminality and doubt is where we have to be right now.

I have argued elsewhere that the late twentieth century global culture is suffering a Hermes-inflation, following the Apollo-inflation of the enlightenment and the Prometheus-inflation of the industrial age, and that the collapse of rationality and the radical relativism, groundlessness, fragmentation, cynicism, and nihilism associated with postmodernity are not a peculiar new phenomenon but would have been recognised in Greco-Roman culture as evidence of the presence of Hermes/Mercury, the god of liminality, the god of markets, the god of magic, the Trickster, the Cowboy, and the Messenger. Whether we call ourselves constructive, deconstructive, reconstructive, or hyperconstructive postmodernists, or simply live unreflectingly in the information society and the unregulated marketplace, we are collectively enmeshed in this "old story." We can extricate ourselves sufficiently from this enmeshment to reflect rationally and critically on the truth of this story. We can, perhaps, abandon this truth and cling instead to the myth and truth of Zeus or Gaia or Aphrodite. Or we can transcend our need to adhere to a single truth and acknowledge that the essential incompleteness of rationally derived truths and the inevitability of conflicts between them are aspects of the truth. If this is our solution, we are of course simply accepting Hermes' advice that all the squabbling gods must be worshipped equally (including himself). The same myth which undermines conventional knowledge and makes education a commodity is the myth which subverts and destabilises the patriarchy and promises a "transformed continuity," for Hermes, the god of boundaries, is also the god of transformation. An integral apprehension of the spiritual whole is grounded in the imaginal reality of the mythical structure as firmly as it is in the critically observed factual reality of the mental structure.

In Gebser's understanding, the everpresent origin is sensed by the archaic structure, felt by the magic, imagined by the mythical, conceptualised by the mental and concretely perceived by the integral. A curriculum for the good of the world will attend to
the unfolding process of the child as it attends to the sensation, feeling, imagining, conceptualisation, and concrescence of a truth which is neither one nor many, a truth which, we may speculate, will become transparent to us as we learn to see through not only the fragments of sensory and imaginal reality, but even through our ways of seeing.

References


Notes

1. In spite of the significance of Gebser's work, there is remarkably little commentary or critique in English. However, see Georg Feuerstein (1987); E.M. Kramer (1992); and Alan Combs (1996). Gebser's ideas were a key source for Ken Wilber (1981).

2. Gebser's concept of "plus-mutation" describes a process of enrichment, in which the earlier structure is not destroyed but added to. For instance the previously dominant mythical structure did not disappear with the full emergence of mental-rational consciousness but came to be largely concealed by rationalization.

3. Gebser is somewhat coy about dating the mutations. He suggests that since quantified time does not exist in pre-metaphysical consciousness it is meaningless to set the earlier mutations on a linear timeline. Feuerstein (1987) suggests that we date archaic consciousness from the emergence of proto-humans to the emergence of the magic structure about 750,000 BC. The mythical structure emerges about 20,000 BC and mental consciousness some time after 5000 BC. It emerges fully in the eighth century BC (more or less simultaneously in Greece, India, Palestine, and China). After the collapse of the Roman Empire, Europe experienced a regression to magical-mythical consciousness while the mental structure was preserved in the Byzantine and Arab worlds. It was only in the late medieval period that the mental structure becomes widely discernible once more in Europe, only to deteriorate to its deficient form, which Gebser calls "rational" consciousness, in the past four hundred years.

The evidence which Gebser draws on to support his theory is mainly archaeological and philological. While he presents his theory as universal one, most of his illustrations come from Indo-European sources and his focus is almost entirely on the evolution of European culture.

4. Gebser does not give us a straightforward definition of the terms "efficiency" and "deficiency," though he uses the words often and their meaning is clear from the many contexts. For instance, when writing of mental structure of consciousness as it presents itself in contemporary Western culture, he sees deficiency in the "exhaustion" of a structure which has lost its constituting strength and energy. He develops the notion that with each mutation of consciousness there is a sequence in which an efficient structure provides a valid means of dealing with the world, only to collapse into deficiency before it makes way for a new mutation. Magic turns to sorcery; lived myth turns to narrated myth; a rich mental consciousness turns to a narrow rational consciousness.

5. Gebser himself avoided referring to "layers" or "levels" of consciousness, on the grounds that the terms are embedded in a spatial, hierarchical metaphor. He argued that his model is not a developmental one, that it was not based on a notion of progress. More recently emerging structures should not be valued as "superior" to earlier ones. Nor should they be regarded as determined by the earlier ones.


7. Gebser does not talk about the unconscious, but rather refers to different intensities of consciousness.

8. See Wilfred Bion (1961).

9. The archaic, undifferentiated union of human and environment was first called "participation mystique" by Levy-Bruhl (1923). In the face of adverse criticism he later modified his theory, but the phrase has been adopted by many later theorists, to refer to the consciousness both of primal human beings and of newborn infants.

10. In mass behavior or mob behavior we see groups of human beings acting out of collective impulse and emotion to preserve or propagate the collective identity. Neumann argues that, since contemporary urban human beings have lost their connection both to the earth
and to a clan to which they might be consciously and unconsciously bound, there is a schism between conscious and unconscious experience. There is still a largely unconscious mass component in modern human beings, but it is irrational, emotional, anti-individual, and destructive, where the primal group consciousness was constructive, synthetic, and creative. Map behavior as we might witness it today represents a takeover of rational consciousness by a repressed magic structure and accordingly is likely to be negative in its manifestations.

13. The use of the masculine pronoun is appropriate here, given the self-consciously masculinist thrust of mental-rational consciousness historically. The gradual breakdown of masculinist assumptions during the twentieth century may be symptomatic of the breakdown of the mental-rational structure.

15. I have followed Feuerstein’s translation here. Gebser carefully distinguishes between the spiritual and spirit. The latter is dualistically opposed to matter in the mental-rational consciousness. The spiritual, for Gebser, signifies the whole, which is the diphainon “prior” (but not in a temporal sense) to space and time. See Feuerstein (1987, 161).
16. Gebser distinguishes with the unperspectival magic structure, the preperspectival mythical structure, the perspectival mental structure, and the aperspectival integral structure.

Our concern is with integrity and ultimately with the whole; the word “aperspectival” conveys our attempt to deal with wholeness. It is a definition which differentiates a perception of reality that is neither perspectively restricted to only one sector nor merely unperspectively evocative of a vague sense of reality. (Gebser 1985, 3)
17. Gebser uses this word to denote an integration achieved through integral-rational consciousness, which parallels the synthesis achieved through mental-rational consciousness or mystical symbolism.

18. Kramer mixes an analogy which is useful here.
When we take a material object, a cube for instance, every dimension of it means other dimensions, thus integrating and in turn being integrated by them. The cubicness of a cube is understood as six planes that simultaneously rely on each other in order to form the object known as a “cube.” Cubicness is an integral meaning that lubricates the instant one atomises the subject into six plane surfaces. This is why mental-reductionism fails as an explanation, for the cubicness of the object depends on the integrated relationships of all the surfaces at once. (Kramer 1992, xxiv)

19. Gebser shows no interest in the “ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny” argument which was being postulated by Neumann at the time of his writing, though it would appear to give some support to his model. See Neumann (1973, xx). Neumann and Gebser were both members of Jung’s Enneon circle at the time when they were writing The Origin and History of Consciousness and The Ever Present Origin. They do not, however, refer to each other’s work.

20. Even the more wholistic developmental models of Wilber and Kegan must bear the same criticism. While they deal in different partial ways with the phenomenon of integrity, they make the culturally bound assumptions that development is individual and linear and that it proceeds from inferior body to superior spirit. See Jean Piaget (1972); Sigmund Freud (1982); Eric Ericson (1965); Lawrence Kohlberg (1984); Robert Kegan (1982); Ken Wilber (1980).

21. Gebser’s notion of the emergence of new structures through plus-mutation is consistent with Sheldrake’s theory of morphic fields. In such a framework, we should expect integral consciousness to become increasingly common as the field is established. See Rupert Sheldrake (1988).

22. Kegan argues just as a modern society demands of its members that they be capable of fourth-order thinking, a postmodern society demands fifth order thinking, but few of us appear to be capable of the complex subject-object differentiation involved.

Refusing to see oneself or the other as a single system or form, regarding the premise of completeness as a tempting pretense, constructing the process of interacting as prior to the existence of the form or system, facing protracted conflict as a likely sign of one’s own assumptions of wholeness, distinctness, completeness, or priority—all of these ways of constructing reality require that the epistemological construction of system, form or theory be relativised, moved from subject in one’s knowing to object in one’s knowing. (Kegan 1994, 321)

23. Hillman writes of the Greek gods as root metaphors which still frame our ways of imagining and thinking in European culture. Within and behind these ideas, making them so instinctually certain, so libidinally charged with excitement and endurance, so universally familiar, so few in number and so repetitive in history, are the archetypes which form the structures of our consciousness with such force and such possession that we might, as we have in the past, call them Gods. (Hillman 1975, 129)

24. Irrationality is a characteristic of the mythical structure, irrationality of the integral.

It is of fundamental importance that we clearly distinguish between “irrational” and “arational.” For this distinction lies at the very heart of our deliberations. There is a fundamental distinction between the attempt to go beyond the merely measurable, knowing and respecting it while striving to be free from it, and rejecting and disregarding the measurable by regressing to the immoderate and unfathomable chaos of the ambivalent and even fragmented polyevalence of psychic and natural interrelation. (Gebser 1985, 147)

25. For a discussion of the implications of time freedom for our experience of difference, see John W. Murphy, J.W. and Jung Min Choi, "Jean Gebser, The Commonweal and the Politics of Difference" in Kramer (1992, 201-216).

26. The shift in our modes of thought which Gebser was documenting in the forties has been reinforced by an information and communication technology which operates outside our conventional notions of space and time. It is possible now for an entire organization to exist outside the conventions of time and place which we have taken for granted for three thousand years. It seems to be becoming possible through information technology to transcend not only time and space but ego, as information scientists pursue the fantasy of enabling a hundred minds (or ten thousand) in instantaneous communication to function as a single great mind. This transcendence of the limitations of the individual’s mental powers is a very different thing from the submergence of the individual in the group which characterizes magico-mythical consciousness. The very fantasy that such a development is possible, or even desirable, indicates a significant shift in our consciousness. We may assume that many of our students have made a more substantial shift than we have.

27. Jung uses the word “inflation” to denote a condition in which the psyche is “blown up” by a particular energy to the extent that it becomes unbalanced. The word can be also used in a collective sense, in that we can witness a “cultural inflation.” Jung pointed to what he called the “Wotan” inflation in interpreting the phenomenon of Nazi Germany.