

Patterns of Human Evolution

Introduction

(This article is a synthesis of the books 'Masters of Wisdom' from [J.G. Bennett](#) and 'The Ever-Present Origin' from the evolutionary philosopher [Jean Gebser](#). Both, Bennett and Gebser had developed a unique theory about human or consciousness evolution, but rather from viewpoints far apart. Bennett was a true spiritual cosmopolitan, with a broad understanding about human developments and insights from various sources. Gebser on the other hand, was focused on a Western or European worldview and philosophies, but he did also include some sources from China. He also did develop his work far more isolated, he didn't know about other writings which eventually came to similar conclusions as he was.

Jean Gebser developed his theory in a for academics unusual way. He mentioned, that the cause was a flashlike intuition about human evolution and after that he devoted his life more or less to research to confirm his thesis. He was an extraordinary connoisseur of western culture history and he quotes and mentions in his monumental work from Plato to Hegel, from ancient art to modern painting of the 20th century, a hardly manageable number of sources (alone the names and subject indexes are a book of 60 pages).

For instance he used a lot of Neoplatonic sources, but he wasn't aware of any writings of Sufis or Islamic scholars. In this light his work is very unique, as he discovered more or less out of nothing, a concept which seems to be universal enough to resemble the work of many other philosophers from different ages.

About Gebser's book 'The Ever-Present Origin'

"Ursprung und Gegenwart is the magnum opus of cultural historian and evolutionary philosopher [Jean Gebser](#). Its two parts were first published in 1949 and 1953, respectively. As early as 1951, the Bollingen Foundation contemplated the feasibility of an English-language version. In his eight-page review, the distinguished philosopher of history and author of studies of the evolution of human consciousness [Erich Kahler](#) (*Man the Measure*, 1943; *The Tower and the Abyss*, 1957) encouraged publication, calling the book "a very important, indeed in some respects pioneering piece of work," "vastly, solidly, and subtly documented by a wealth of anthropological, mythological, linguistic, artistic, philosophical, and scientific material which is shown in its multifold and striking interrelationship...." Despite this warmly appreciative and incisive estimation, the first complete English translation was undertaken only in 1975, by Professors [Noel Barstad](#) (Modern Languages) and [Algis Mickunas](#) (Philosophy) at the University of Ohio. In 1977, after discussions with the author's widow, Professor [Barstad](#) undertook a complete retranslation and is responsible for the English version in its present form. The Ever-Present Origin was eventually published in 1985 by Ohio University Press." (Source [3], [Ulrich J. Mohrhoff](#))

The structures of consciousness

"Gebser's major thesis was that human [consciousness](#) is in transition, and that these transitions are "mutations" and not continuous. These jumps or transformations involve structural changes in both [mind](#) and [body](#). Gebser held that previous consciousness structures continue to operate parallel to the emergent structure.

Consciousness is "presence", or "being present":^[3]

As Gebser understands the term, "conscious is neither knowledge nor conscience but must be understood for the time being in the broadest sense as wakeful presence."^[3]

Each consciousness structure eventually becomes deficient, and is replaced by a following structure. The stress and chaos in [Europe](#) from 1914 to 1945 were the symptoms of a structure of [consciousness](#) that was at the end of its effectiveness, and which heralded the birth of a new form of consciousness. The first evidence he witnessed was in the novel use of [language](#) and [literature](#). He modified this position in 1943 so as to include the changes which were occurring in the arts and sciences at that time.

His thesis of the failure of one structure of consciousness alongside the emergence of a new one led him to inquire as to whether such had not occurred before. His work, *Ursprung und Gegenwart* is the result of that inquiry. It was published in various editions from 1949 to 1953, and translated into English as *The Ever-Present Origin*. Working from the historical evidence of almost every major field, (e.g., [poetry](#), [music](#), [visual arts](#), [architecture](#), [philosophy](#), [religion](#), [physics](#) and the other [natural sciences](#), etc.) Gebser saw traces of the emergence (which he called "efficiency") and collapse ("deficiency") of various structures of consciousness throughout [history](#)." (Source [Wikipedia](#))

Gebser distinguished the following structures, which each follows one another, but that does not mean that the old structure disappears, it gets integrated in the new culture that start to thrive after each new period or age that comes along with the dominance of a new structure.

"With the unfolding of each consciousness mutation, consciousness increases in intensity; but the concept of evolution, with its continuous development, excludes this discontinuous character of mutation. The unfolding, then, is an enrichment tied, as we shall observe, to a gain in dimensionality; yet it is also an impoverishment because of the increasing remoteness from origin." (Jean Gebser, The Ever-Present Origin. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1985, 41)

1.	The archaic structure	It is zero-dimensional in the sense of a total absence of differentiation. There is no subject-object polarity (let alone duality), no differentiation between self and other, between soul and nature, between the individual and the universe. [3] p.53	~ before 10 000 BC
2.	The magic structure	The primal man becomes the maker; for the first time he faces the world; vital impulse and instinct thus unfold and develop a consciousness in dealing with Nature; witchcraft and sorcery, totem and taboo are the natural means of freeing himself from Nature.	~ before 2500 BC
3.	The mythical structure	Brings the awareness of the inner life of the soul, its history and its origin, the primal Myth	Starting in 2500 BC
4.	The mental structure	It individualizes man from his previously valid world, emphasizing his singularity and making his ego possible	Starting in 500 BC
5.	The integral structure	Freedom from all the structures by their transparent rearrangement into one integral oneness of being	Starting in 20th

(The following descriptions of the 5 structures are mainly written in the interpretation of Gebser's work of the Author of this article.)

The Archaic structure

The archaic structure is the most remote from the presently dominant consciousness structure and therefore the most difficult for us to envision. [3] p.53

Gebser did warn about, that the word archaic structure does not mean "primitive", he chooses the word Archaic from the Greek meaning of the word (Beginning or Origin). He also points out, that they were revered by their descendants as the "true men of earlier times," as "holy men" (43), as possessors of wisdom.[3] p.53

However Gebser's view about this structure was a bit fuzzy about the levels of consciousness of the people in this time. On the one hand he describes it as not yet awakened soul and on the other hand he attaches great importance to the fact that heaven and earth were still one for these people. One could interpret those statements that this people weren't yet awake towards the physical world, because they were new inhabitants on earth. They have not yet figured out how to take full advantage of animal or plant life for themselves, let alone the use of sophisticated material objects. But their relationships with their origin or creator were still intact, as it was the case for Adam, who, according to [Genesis](#), had a lively conversation with God.

The Magic structure ●

In the magic structure mankind did start to make use of the world for themselves. Even according to Gebser's it was still one-dimensional and directed towards unity. One-dimensional means their mind wasn't able to think in any direction. So the symbol of those times is the point. Gebser did describe in detail the close relationship of this people with the animal world, which was, according to him, essential to be successful hunters with the simple equipment for hunting in this time. Therefore, he interprets some of the cave paintings as a magical rituals to bind the spirit of the animals, to hunt them more easily.

The Mythical structure ○

"Gebser symbolizes the "two-dimensional" mythical structure by the circle and cyclical time, based on man's discovery of the rhythmic recurrence of natural events and of his inner reflections on his experience of those events. "...[W]hereas the distinguishing characteristic of the magic structure was the emergent awareness of nature, the essential characteristic of the mythical structure is the emergent awareness of soul." [5] In the mythical structure events, objects and persons are woven together in stories. Mythologies give coherence to consciousness. [6]. "

(Source [Wikipedia](#))

Historically we can tie this structure to the great cultures of '[The Great Mother](#)'. Agriculture and settlements did require more complex social interactions as in the magic structure. Instead of the strong relationship to animal world man started to be close to the life of plants and animals as farm animals.

The Mental structure ⚠

"The mental structure appropriates events, objects and persons by the use of logic.[7] In its efficient form, the mental structure is "three-dimensional". Gebser symbolizes it with the "triangle", which illustrates a "trinity" of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis: "the base of the triangle with its two points lying in opposition represents the dual contraries or antinomies which are unified at the point or apex." [15] For Gebser, this is the essence of "the emergence of directed or discursive thought" [16] with which Western science would be built. " (Source [Wikipedia](#))

The Integral structure

"Gebser introduced the notion of presentation which means to make something present through transparency. An aspect of integral awareness is the presentation, or "making present", of the various structures of awareness. Rather than allowing only one (rational) structure to be valid, all structures are recognized, presented, one through the other. This awareness of and acceptance of the various structures enables one to live through the various structures rather than to be subjected to them ("lived by" them in German). " (Source [Wikipedia](#))

About Bennett's book 'The Masters of Wisdom'

"[J. G. Bennett](#), philosopher, mathematician and outstanding practical interpreter of the ideas of [G. I. Gurdjieff](#), examines in this, his last book, evidence for one of the most persistent of human beliefs - that throughout history a hidden group of men has existed which, with wisdom beyond normal human understanding, has periodically intervened in troubled world affairs to restore harmony and inject a new spiritual potential for human evolution. John Bennett died on the day he had decided to write the last chapter of The Master of Wisdom. The book is published just as Bennett left the manuscript. His unique study of unconventional; history offers detailed evidence in support of a powerful and unifying hypothesis of a guiding [Demiurgic](#) intelligence and contains a message that is vital for the survival of mankind. --- (from book's back cover" ([5])

About the early time of human evolution Bennett wrote, that several groups of men introduced different cultural and languages in different places. "The task of the true initiates was to provide mankind with adequate language to express abstract ideas, to lay the foundations of belief in a communication with the spiritual world and to teach ordinary men and women to think for themselves" ([5] Pos 546). He also identified four main cultures in which spiritual and cultural rules were taught by the [Demiurgic](#) intelligence through the initiates. Each of this cultures developed over time a specific pattern of consciousness and skills, which was essential for the further development of mankind.

Patterns of consciousness

About the the four that Bennett had studied in detail are:

1. [The Great Mother](#) This had its roots in the fertility cults of remote antiquity. It was predominant in the near and middle East and in the eastern Mediterranean, especially in Asia Minor. The Great Mother was associated with a matriarchal society engaged in agriculture, and this culture gave rise to the first settlements. It originated no special language since none was needed.
2. [The Great Spirit](#) This became prevalent in central Asia and the Far East and soon crossed over into northern America. Its primal origin was in the Demiurgic presences who took the form of magicians and established the technique of possession. The form of society was nomadic, where guidance came through the shamans who were inspired. The subtle polysynthetic and agglutinative languages created were capable of conveying the sense of an unseen spiritual presence and the timeless pattern of situations. (see also [Great Spirit](#) in Nordamerica)
3. [The Creator God](#) This probably originated in north-east Africa and developed in later millennia traditions to do with the creative "magical" powers of the human psyche. From this source came the trilateral Hamito-semitic languages which are so well-suited to a description of the variety of creative manifestation. The social form was that of an aristocracy with a divine ruler. (see also [Creator deity](#) on Wikipedia)
4. [The Saviour God](#) This, as we shall see, probably originated within the Arctic circle in the region of northern Siberia. It was the Hyperborean culture. It produced the inflected Indo-European languages. The culture was based on a sense of the uncertainty of existence and the idea of the need for man to co-operate with creative intelligence to maintain his life and to progress. The languages produced were well-suited to deal with actions in space and time. The caste society was developed.

According Bennett, in the [heroic epoch](#) (5000 ~BCE) "mankind turned its attention to mortality and immortality in a new way" ([5] pos 738), which did inaugurate society as we know it. But those cultures where mostly complete hierarchical where rulers have been seen as king/gods. Despite of the great scientific achievements we need "to remember their cruelty, their childish vanity and lust for power." ([5] pos 763). Later, after some catastrophic events such as the eruption of the [Santorini vulcano](#) (between 1642~1540 BCE), the cultures of, The Great Mother, The Great Spirit, The Saviour and Creator God found their way to the Mesopotamian region through the extensive migrations triggered by these events. (see [5] pos. 838 ff). This opened the way for a new revelation that was not limited to this region but led to the rise of the [Abrahamic religions](#) in this area.



Synthesis

As Gebser's theory could be interpreted as an [Exoteric](#) view and Bennet's as an [Esoteric](#), both discovered some interesting patterns about the chaotic evolution of human consciousness from ones unique view. Some of this pattern have correlation others not. If ones try to map those correlation it would look like the following chart.

According Gebser	According Bennett	Notes
The archaic structure	not a direct subject of his book	The archaic structure could be linked to Bennett's concept of the Demiurgic intelligence, which he ties to the description of the Elohim in the Genesis. "The Elohim preside over the successive stages of differentiation that first prepare the Earth for the coming of life, then bring life and finally man to be the ruler of life" ([5] pos 288).
The magic structure	The Great Spirit	The correlation between 'the magic structure' the 'Great Spirit' is the most apparently, even Bennett's description is more universal/global.
The mythical structure	The Great Mother and the Heroic epoch	Here it is mix of areas and structures visible. Gebser's sees this structure from a historic view, but is not completely aware, that this period was already a melting together of the former structures. But he mentioned several time, that his structures can't be seen isolated.
The mental structure	Heroic epoch followed by the rise of Abrahamic religions	Although Gebser sees the rise of mental structures from 500 BC onwards, there is a strong correlation between Bennett's view of the emerging mental capacities of humanity in the heroic era, and his view.
The integral structure	not a direct subject of his book	The integral structure talks about the emerging new consciousness that Gebser did witness in the 20th century. But his descriptions of this structure could easily be linked to Bennett's explanation of the essence of Jesus' main message ("Love that unites man and God" ([5] pos. 1898)). (considering that this message has still not reached the people)

If ones try to distillate the essence of both writings, Gebser's hope about the new "making present", of the various structures of awareness, and Bennett's explanation about ongoing struggle in history to ground the essence of the religions on earth, we could conclude that God's love towards his creation is somehow still present, but on the other far away from the live of modern man. And to make an integral structure of consciousness a reality in the 21th century, mankind needs to find and understand its roots as well as the essence of God's love towards mankind.

References

1. U. Mohrhoff in ANTIMATTERS 2 (3), 2008 ([download](#))
2. Jean Gebser, The Ever-Present Origin (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1985).
3. Mahood 1996.
4. Jean Gebser, Der unsichtbare Ursprung (Olten: Walter, 1970); "The Invisible Origin," translated by Th. Röttgers and edited by S. Saiter, The Journal of Conscious Evolution 1, 2005 (no page numbers).
5. The Masters of Wisdom (The Collected Works of J.G. Bennett Book 26) (English Kindle Edition)

See also

1. Next article [Psychic forces, Life-forces](#)
2. Book: [The Ever-Present Origin \(link to Kindle Edition\)](#)
3. Excerpt, [The Ever-Present Origin](#) .
4. Abstract, [The Master of Wisdom](#),