

Jean Gebser

General

Jean Gebser (German: [ˈɡeːpsɐ]; August 20, 1905 – May 14, 1973) was a philosopher, a linguist, and a poet, who described the structures of human consciousness.

(Source [Wikipedia](#))

Biography

"Jean Gebser (1905–1973) was a German-Swiss cultural philosopher, intellectual mystic, poet, and scholar of the evolution of [consciousness](#). Many know him in the English-speaking world for his magisterial text *The Ever-Present Origin* (1949–1952), a massive tome spanning art, language, and human history with great detail. Though perhaps lesser known than C. G. Jung, Erich Von Neumann (*Origins and History of Consciousness*), Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (*The Human Phenomenon*), or Sri Aurobindo Ghose (*The Life Divine*)." (source [liminal blog](#))

"Born Hans Gebser in Posen in Imperial Germany (now Poland), he left Germany in 1929, living for a time in Italy and then in France. He then moved to Spain, mastered the Spanish language in a few months and entered the Spanish Civil Service where he rose to become a senior official in the Spanish Ministry of Education. Before the Spanish Civil War began, he moved to Paris, and then to Southern France. It was here that he changed his German first name "Hans" to the French "Jean." He lived in Paris for a while but saw the unavoidability of a German invasion. He fled to Switzerland in 1939, escaping only hours before the border was closed. He spent the rest of his life near Bern, where he did most of his writing. Even late in life, Gebser traveled widely in India, the Far East, and the Americas, and wrote half a dozen more books. He was also a published poet.

Gebser died in Wabern bei Bern on May 14, 1973 "with a soft and knowing smile." His personal letters and publications are held at the Gebser Archives at the University of Oklahoma History of Science Collections, Norman, Oklahoma, Bizzel Libraries." (Source [Wikipedia](#))

Consciousness in transition

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":

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."

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.

The structures of consciousness

Gebser distinguished the following structures:

- The archaic structure
- The magic structure
- The mythical structure
- The mental structure
- The integral structure

See also

1. [Patterns of Human Evolution](#), about Gebser's work ([OSL Wiki](#))
2. [Psychic forces, Life-forces](#) ([OSL Wiki](#))

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