SESSION 1 (DECEMBER 30, 2017)

In part one, we'll be exploring the structures of consciousness as detailed in Jean Gebser's magnum opus exploring the transformation of human consciousness across (and through) time, *The Ever-Present Origin*, leaping from the primordial caves of Lascaux to the present-day "cave" of technological apparatus now enveloping the planet. Participants will be invited to explore how the structures of consciousness—the archaic, magic, mythic, mental, and integral—constitute their own phenomenological experience.

SESSION 2: (JANUARY 4, 2018)

Part two, in January, features a 90 minute talk on the manifestations of "integral consciousness" — what Sri Aurobindo called the "supra mental" or Teilhard de Chardin described as the "noosphere", or still more to what Philip K. Dick called "ultra meta cognition" — as they appear in our current day. We'll be looking at art, mythology, and other cultural expressions and manifestations of integrality to begin the new year with a temporal high note.

Recommended Reading:

Stanford Encyclopeda of Philosophy’s intro to Phenomenology (recommend, especially, Merleau-Ponty)

Barfield, Owen. *Saving the Appearances*

Cheak, Aaron, “Rendering Darkness and Light Present: Jean Gebser and the Principle of Diaphany”

Cheak, Aaron. “From Poetry to Kulturphilosophie: A Philosophical Biography of Jean Gebser with Critical Translations”

Combs, Allan. *Radiance of Being: Understanding the Grand Integral Vision; Living the Integral Life*


Gebser, Jean. *The Ever-Present Origin*

Grusin, Richard. *The Non-Human Turn*
Lachman, Gary. *The Secret Teachers of the Western World*

Morton, Timothy. *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*

Thompson, William Irwin. *Coming into Being: Artifacts and Texts in the Evolution of Consciousness*

Thompson, William Irwin. *Self and Society: Studies in the Evolution of Culture*

**Recommended Media:**

*Cave of Forgotten Dreams* (2010)

*The Invisibles* (2017 reprint)

*Arrival* (2017)

*Interstellar* (2014)

*AKIRA,* (1986)

*Ghost in the Shell* (1994)

Selected tracks by POGO

**Jean Gebser in Other Works**

Jean Gebser has been picked up by integral thinkers, such as the aforementioned William Irwin Thompson and Allan Combs. He has also been used in the integral philosophy of Ken Wilber through works like *The Atman Project* and *Up From Eden,* though within a psycho-spiritual system of development. This system has since evolved — no pun intended — into Integral Theory via *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality: The Spirit of Evolution,* considered Wilber’s own magnum opus. There’s much to value in this text as a work of synthesis and introduction to many evolution of consciousness scholars (it functions as a kind of literary portal to many great masterworks in their own right, such as Gebser himself, Arthur Koestler, Sri Aurobindo, etc.).

*SES* is constructed *systemically* and introduces some core ideas Wilber has port forth in the decades since (such as “AQAL,” which orders and systemizes phenomenology into interior, exterior, individual and collective). There is some tension, and question as to whether this approach is predominantly a mental-rational “summing up” of *quanta* as Gebser warns us about in *EPO,* so I provide this recommendation with qualifiers. Read *critically* and make your discernments there, but the antidote is usually simple: read the source materials. The writings of Teilhard, Gebser, Aurobindo etc. — essentially the foundational texts of this “evolutionary mysticism” — are the kinds of literature that can transform your life as they did for writers like Ken Wilber himself, or artists like Philip K. Dick and even Flannery O’Connor (another fan of Teilhard).

In other works, such as Daniel Pinchbeck’s popular *2012: The Return of Quetzalcoatl,* Gebser is utilized to put forward the thesis that a new consciousness is emerging with its key theme being a new experience of time in tandem with the retrieval of the lost magical timeliness, and mythical rhythmicity. Pinchbeck links Gebser’s work on the integral a-chronon with the awakening of the left in cultural movements, and the move back to integrating the often violently suppressed indigenous and non-Western perspectives on time and reality. Pinchbeck also brings in Rudolf Steiner, Walter Benjamin, and Jose Arguelles to craft his thesis. I recommend this as helpful statement from the
“consciousness culture” as well as a historical note of the “New Edge”—embracing the metaphysical, the magical, and the mythical as allies in the leap from the deficient mental-rational to the integral.

**The Evolution of Consciousness**

Other works in the “evolution of consciousness milieu” have a similar, if partly overlapping thesis. The early 20th century esoteric mystic and founder of Anthroposophy (and the Waldorf Schools) Rudolf Steiner suggested a new consciousness emergence was underway, and that earlier times had a different forms of knowledge (intuitive sciences). See *Cosmic Memory*. This dovetails in with the 1970s hit (and recent resurgence), *The Origins of Consciousness in the Bicameral Mind*, by Julian Jaynes. This hypothesis was recently retrieved and re-gained popular interest through the popular HBO show Westworld. In his book, Jaynes posited that early human consciousness experience the left and right hemispheres differently. The right hemisphere communicated with the left through auditory hallucination and the appearance of gods, an experience that gradually dwindled as the modern ego and self emerged. Other popular authors, such as Leonard Shlain, suggests in *The Alphabet and the Goddess* that human consciousness, before written language, utilized the right hemisphere’s imagistic language more than the left hemisphere’s alphabetic and—to borrow a Gebserian term, mental—consciousness.

Still more recently, Gary Lachman in *The Secret Teachers of the Western World* and *The Lost Knowledge of the Imagination* suggests a similar thesis about recent historical imbalance of the more rational, scientific forms of knowledge and our ancestral intuitive, imagistic, and magical forms of knowing.

The resurgence of non-alphabetic language through electronic media by way of memes, GIFs, and the overall image-focused gestalt of electronic culture (from movies to iconography of Hollywood to text emojis) implicates a resurgence of the magical and mythical consciousness and the breakdown of an alphabetic-centric mind. The magic and mythic are retrieved in the new digital landscape of planetization. This note, however, is for another class…

**Phenomenological Questions**

- What is our experience of **space**? Do objects have numinous qualities? Example: how is “space” experienced in a movie theater vs. driving a car, or taking a hike on a mountain?
- How do we experience **time**? What is the passage of time like for us? Daily, weekly, monthly, year, or even decades-long? Is it linear, circular, rhythmic? Is it timeless?
- Have these experiences of space and time **changed**? How do they flow or stop, stretch or shorten, throughout our lives? Throughout our day? What do we notice about our sensory experience during these shifts and changes? Our sense of the world? This can be a daily or even hourly form of reflection.
- How has language transformed our experience of reality? What happened when you learned a new language, read an old book, switched mediums (stopped reading books and only scanning articles, or just using social media)?

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1 Wouter J. Hanegraaff makes this point in *Western Esotericism: A Guide for the Perplexed* while introducing new countercultural movements of Western esotericism.
• Has a book ever changed the way you saw the world for a while? A story?
• What is language like in dreams, daytime reverie, or the waking state? How do objects feel before and after a meditation, or a walk?

Methodology

• Gebser’s **phenomenological approach** looks at, and provides careful attention to, specific expressions of art, language, and culture, drawing insights on the phenomenology — the **umwelt**, and **life world** — of their creators.
• The importance of a tangible, phenomenological, and experiential encounter with the structures of consciousness — avoiding wherever possible exclusionary mental abstraction, devoid of a phenomenological encounter and intuitive apprehension.
• Gebser began with an interest in poetry and language and its changes, specifically through the poetry of **Rilke**. *(Rilke and Spain)*

Phenomenological Exercises

These can be understood as forms of daily practices—contemplations—with the intention to ground, or immerse, yourself in your own phenomenological and sensory experience. Please feel encouraged to write down your observations in a journal (and even this can be a sensorial choice: a digital notepad, or a physical notebook).

• Spend time in contemplation and try to discern noticeable, experiential encounters with the structures (differences in one’s experience of time and space)
• Notice your sense of space, and the passing of time, while watching movies or TV
• Spend time paying attention to sound and the inner images you associate with those sounds as you go through your day
• If you remember your dreams, notice the sense of space and movement in your dream.
• Note any significant images or symbolism in your dream and the kind of meaning these images are imbued with
• Explore your sense of will, self, and material space in a pure waking (and, perhaps, caffeinated) state.
• Contemplate the “witness” of these fluidic states — who is watching them all as you move through them?
• Write your observations down in a notepad
The Structures of Consciousness and their corresponding characteristics

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<tr>
<th><strong>ARCHAIC</strong></th>
<th><strong>ZERO</strong></th>
<th><strong>PRE-SPACE/TEMPORAL</strong></th>
<th><strong>INTEGRAL</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>MAGIC</strong></td>
<td><strong>POINT</strong></td>
<td><strong>SPACELESS/TIMELESS</strong></td>
<td><strong>UNITARY WOVENNESS/FUSION</strong></td>
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<td><strong>MYTHIC</strong></td>
<td><strong>CIRCLE</strong></td>
<td><strong>SPACELESS / NATURAL TEMPORALITY</strong></td>
<td><strong>CIRCULAR AND POLAR / COMPLEMENTARY</strong></td>
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<td><strong>INTEGRAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>SPHERE</strong></td>
<td><strong>SPACE-FREE/TIME FREE</strong></td>
<td><strong>DIAPHANOUS, &quot;RENDERING WHOLE&quot;</strong></td>
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