

## **The Archaic structure of consciousness**

The Archaic structure of consciousness is perhaps the most difficult to understand, for it is the one most removed from our present-day way of thinking. Stated succinctly, it can be likened to zero dimensional mentation, a world devoid of any perspectivity at all. It is a state in which the holder of consciousness is perhaps only minimally aware of himself or his relationship to the world around him. According to Feuerstein, this structure denotes "a consciousness of maximum latency and minimum transparency."<sup>[5]</sup> The term "archaic" as used here is derived from the Greek *arce*, meaning inception, or origin. Origin (or *Ursprung*, in the original German) is the source from which all springs, but it is that which springs forth itself. It is the essence which is behind and which underlies consciousness. 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."<sup>[6]</sup> This presence, or being present, excludes two further overpowering by the past (past-orientation) or any future-oriented finality. He writes:

<Q>It is our task to presentiate the past in ourselves, not to lose the present to the transient power of the past. This we can achieve by recognizing the balancing power of the latent "future" with its character of the present, which is to say, its potentiality for consciousness.<sup>[7]</sup>

At the origin, there is not past to overwhelm and the future is complete potentiality. Consequently, that which we understand to intuit consciousness to be is qualitatively different from this original structure. What hampers any investigation into it is the fact that we have no records, no written testimony, regarding it. It is a state that is swallowed by the primal shadows of a far-distant past. It is referred to in myths and legends, but these references are of a much later time. About all we can say in this regard is that within the Archaic structure the consciousness is quite undifferentiated; it is just there, and things just happen. Man is still unquestionably part of the whole of the universe in which he finds himself. The process of individuation of consciousness, in any sense of the word, has not taken place. This type of consciousness "can be likened to a dimly lit mist devoid of shadows."<sup>[8]</sup> This is not consciousness in any sense that we understand it today. Instead, it can be likened to a state of deep sleep; one that eludes the specification of particularity or uniqueness.

## **The Magic structure of consciousness**

Around some unspecified time far back in our past, a change took place. Man entered into a second phase of development and gained a new structure of consciousness, the Magical structure. This structure is characterized by five primary characteristics:

- (1) its egolessness,
- (2) its spacelessness and timelessness,
- (3) its pointlike-unitary world,
- (4) its interweaving with nature, and
- (5) its magical reaction to the world.<sup>[9]</sup>

A rudimentary self- sense was emerging and language is the real product of this change. Words as vehicles of power are typical of this time and structure; incantations as precursors to prayer emerged. **Consciousness, in this phase, is characterized by man's intimate association with nature.**

This is perhaps the most notable characteristic regarding this structure. Man, at this time, does not really distinguish himself apart from nature. He is a part of all that surrounds him; in the earliest stages it is hard to conceive that he views himself apart from his environment. The plants, animals and other elements of his surroundings share the same fate as he does; they experience in a similar manner. Latency is still dominant; little is transparent. Magic we can define in agreement with Gustav Meyrink as doing without knowing,[10] and it is magic man who is engaged in this activity in all aspects of his existence. The hunting and gathering, the quest for survival are all activities that consume most of his waking hours. But in the quiet of the evening around the fire; there is time for reflection of sorts. The activities of the day were codified (in speech) and recounted. Memory was collective, tribal, and all things were shared and experienced by all. The "I" is not a factor; the "we" is dominant.

This is a one-dimensional, pre-perspectival, point-like existence that occurs in a dream-like state. Unlike the dreamlessness of the previous structure, a recognition is developing in man that he is something different from that around him. Not fully awake to who he is or what his role in the world is, man is recognizing his self as an entity. The forms of expression for this structure can be found in the art and other artifacts that have been recovered from this time. Graven images and idols are what first come to mind. However, ritual should also be considered here, for it is in the specific and directed execution of certain actions and gestures that conveys much about this consciousness structure. Feuerstein feels that this structure persisted till around 40,000 BC and the advent of the Cro-Magnons.

Another feature of this structure that we should bring to mind is its spacelessness and timelessness. The idea that space and time are illusions derives from this stage in our development as human beings. The fact that this is one of the first lessons one learns when embarking upon the esoteric path is further evidence of this idea. To Magic Man, closely linked as he is with others of like mind, space and time need not concern him. In fact, I am not convinced that he would understand them anyway, for there is no need that he do so. Magic, however, is very much alive today, and it comes as no surprise (nor should it be) that there is such a strong interest in magic today. It seems that the fast growing branches of occult study seem to be Wicca (overlaid as it is with feminism) and similar earth magic(k) studies. What is more, it is the most vital and emotional of all structures. We live in very decisive times, potentially catastrophic times. This is a time when emotion rises near the surface of our consciousness and it is here that magic manifests itself. The proliferation of stories and films dealing with Voodoo and similar matters (e.g. *The Serpent and the Rainbow*) further substantiate our claim. Yet, this is not the only structure that seems to be making a comeback these days.

### **The Mythical structure of consciousness**

With the advent of the Cro-Magnons, man became a tool-making individual, also one who formed into larger social structures. As Feuerstein points out, it is clear from the archaeological finds that the Cro-Magnons had evolved a symbolic universe that was religious and shamanistic. Part of this appears to have been a keen interest in calendric reckoning, and with it we may presume the existence of a fairly complex mythology.[11] This structure can be considered two-dimensional since it is characterized by fundamental polarities. Word was the reflector of inner silence; myth was the reflector of the soul.[12] Religion appears as the interaction between memory and feeling.[13] Man is beginning to recognize himself as opposed to others. The next 30,000 odd years or so spent developing these various mythologies. Language is becoming ever more important, it will be noted, and not only receptive, but active, language at that. Not the ear, but the mouth is important in making transparent what is involved in being and life. The mouth now becomes the spiritual organ. We witness, as well, the initial concretization of the "I" of man.

Many myths deal explicitly with man's (unperspectival) separation from nature. Witness the story of the Fall in Genesis (and its admonition to go forth and dominate nature); and the myth of Prometheus and the giving of fire to man. These both indicate a strong awareness of man's differentness from nature. Man is coming into his own, although he is anything but independent of it. One could characterize this as a two-dimensional understanding of the world. Within the circle of believers is where the important acts of life take place. The mere forces of nature have a beingness, often anthropomorphized, but a beingness nevertheless. Myth, then, or the mythologeme is the primary form of expression of this period. Subsets of this basic form would be the gods, symbols and mysteries. These figures provide the emerging consciousness with imaginative images around which to center man's knowledge and understanding of the world. If the Magic structure of consciousness is the emotional aspect, then the Mythical structure is the imaginative one. It is this fact that makes mythology so difficult for us as moderns to deal with. The plethora of images (gods) and the seeming inconsistent pantheons of deities brings the rational mind quickly to confusion. Who can keep track of all these figures, their meanings, their correspondences and their associations. This is the time of the dream.

Up until this time, that is in the magical structure of consciousness, souls and afterlives were not of great importance (at least we do not find a lot of evidence thereof). Yet in the fully developed mythical consciousness, this is important. The entire civilization of Egypt, as we know it, revolved around this very issue. When we are told, then, in certain rosicrucian documents that we must descend into Egypt, we are being told that we must regain, not revert to, our mythical heritage.

Mouths begin to play a more important role. Not only is the shaman and wise person of the tribe a repository of wisdom, others, the poets, such as Homer, begin to play a more important role in the culture. This does not really begin to happen until the mythical structure of consciousness, however. The "I" of man is not yet fully developed, to be sure, but it has developed to that point that it recognizes and demands a separation from nature, from its environment. We can take this as evidence of an increasing crystallization of the

ego. We are on the way to selfhood.

Of course, mythology is very much alive today. This explains the popularity of Joseph Campbell and his work on myth. It explains the appeal that Robert Bly and his "Gathering of Men" workshops have. What both Campbell and Bly do is tell stories: imaginative, intuitively understood stories that reveal to us things that our current rational mode of thinking prohibits us from knowing. We have much to learn from myth, however, and should be ever aware of its influences.

### **The Mental structure of consciousness**

The next shift in consciousness took place between 10,000 B.C. and 500 B.C. This was the transition to the Mental structure of consciousness. It was at this time that man, to use Gebser's image, stepped out of the mythical circle (two-dimensional) into three-dimensional space. Mythology had become so deficient (and it should be noted that each structure has its "efficient" as well as "deficient" form), that man needed a clean break with the past. The plethora of gods and contradictory stories of creation, formation of institutions, and so on threatened to overwhelm the consciousness of man; he practically stood on the verge of drowning in a deluge of mythological mentation. In reaction to this, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and of course, Pythagoras stepped forth to counteract this trend. The mental structure was inaugurated and this coincides with the "discovery" of "causality." Abstraction becomes a key word to describe mental activity and we find man using his mind to overcome and "master" the world around him. With abstraction comes philosophizing, hence the philosopheme is the primary form of expression. Monotheism almost universally replaces the plethora of gods of bygone days; dogma, in both allegory and creed, replaces the symbols of previous times; method replaces the mysteries as man develops an ever-increasing desire to penetrate, and, of course, master nature. This has given rise to the idea of science as the dominant religion of today. Also at this time, time itself was conceptualized (spatialized) as an "arrow" that points from the past to the future by way of the present.[14]

About the time of the Renaissance, man came into his own and really mastered space. It was at this time that perspective was actually introduced into art. Since that time, perspective has come to be a major part and aspect of our mental functioning. Perspective is the life blood of reasoning and the Rational structure of consciousness, which Gebser considers to be only a deficient form of the Mental structure. What we have is the full development of the ego and its related centeredness. We conceive things, events and phenomena in terms of our own perspectives, often at the expense of others. The eye, it will be seen (and the last of the openings in the head), becomes the spiritual organ representative of this structure. Our language, our entire imagery and dominant metaphor takes on visual, spatial character. Space is finally overcome, in the true sense of the word. With the supercession of space, man finally accomplishes his egoistic, individual separation from nature. In this concretization of the "I," we become very aware of our existence, of our beingness, of our individuality. And so it should be. But in a deficient mode, the outcomes, of course, are loneliness, isolation, and alienation, which are so characteristic of our own American culture. In fact, our current materialistic approach to understanding reality is perhaps the final stage of this structure. There is also much everyday evidence to indicate that we are moving through a great change at this time.

We should remember, however, that this is also the time of philosophy. The mental ordering and systematization of thought becomes the real dominant mode of expression. The myths have lost their vibrancy and existential connection to reality. Greek thought followed later by the Scholastics and finally the Enlightenment are all periods in which this particular structure of consciousness flourishes and strongly manifests. It is not without its opposition, of course, since any change will bring about the requisite opposition to its own development. By the time of the Renaissance, though, this structure had firmly established itself and was prepared to move into the next phase of its development. At this time, as was pointed out earlier, a very profound and significant event occurred: man incorporated space into his thought. We cannot underestimate, or overstate, the importance of this development. It is literally at this time that the world begins to shrink. The seeds of our one world community are planted at this time. The ripples begun during the magical structure are widening significantly: first spirit, then soul, now space have become constituents of man's consciousness. Three dimensions have been established and we are prepared for the next significant step we are taking now.

### **The Integral Structure of Consciousness**

As can be guessed, then, Gebser feels that we are on the threshold of a new structure of consciousness, namely the Integral. For Gebser, this structure integrates those which have come before and enable the human mind to transcend the limitations of three-dimensionality. A fourth dimension, time, if you will, is added. This integration is not simply a union of seemingly disparate opposites, rather it is the "irruption of qualitative time into our consciousness." [15] The supercession of time is a theme that will play an extremely important role in this structure. In fact, the ideas of arationality (as opposed to the rationality of the current structure), aperspectivity (as opposed to the perspective, spatially determined mentation of the current structure), and diaphaneity (the transparent recognition of the whole, not just parts) are significant characteristics of this new structure. Stated differently, the tensions and relations between things are more important, at times, than the things themselves; how the relationships develop over time takes precedence to the mere fact that a relationship exists. It will be this structure of consciousness that will enable us to overcome the dualism of the mental structure and actually participate in the transparency of self and life. This fourth structure toward which we are moving is one of minimum latency and maximum transparency; diaphaneity is one of its hallmarks. Transparency is not a "not seeing" as one does not see the pane of glass through which one looks out a window, rather one sees through things and perceives their true nature. Statements about truth are superseded by statements as truth. Verition not description is what we experience and know. Philosophy is replaced by eteology; that is, the *eteon*, or being-in-truth. [16]

This structure is difficult to describe since it depends to a great deal on experience, not just that we have them, but on how intense they are and what we glean from them for now and the future. Intensity is a key characteristic of this mode of consciousness. By intensity, I do not mean simply an emotional relationship to experience or the feeling or deepening of emotion itself. This would be a magical response not an integral one. Perhaps it would be best to review a few examples of what is meant by fourth

dimensionality, arationality and aperspectivity.

Let us start with intensity and use the analogy of love. Love is the energy (yet it has only recently been referred to as such) or the driving force behind true spirituality and spiritual growth. We learn early as mystics and students of the other arts, that we should love our neighbors as ourselves. This is, in fact, one of the two great commandments given us by the Christ and the theme of Love is one that was very strongly developed by the great apostle, Saint Paul, as well. However, it is easy to love those who are our neighbors (even though at times they are exasperating) because they are so much like us. We recognize ourselves in them and so we love them. The affinity of interests, locale, or any other of myriad possibilities makes loving those who are like us a joy. We fulfill our spirituality by adhering to this commandment; it is a yoke that we gladly bear. Nevertheless, this love is a three-dimensional love at best. We love those who fit neatly into our perspectives of being and life. We choose who they are and when and how often we extend that love to them. An integral love, a fourth dimensional love, though, would go beyond that. The Christ also informed us of what that love is when he admonished us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. It is this love that is intense for it is required without asking our opinion (our point of view, our perspective) of it. This is the love of Judas. This is a demanding love that not many are willing to offer.