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technical report

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R. Michael Fisher

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Technical Paper No. 114

In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute

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The In Search of Fearlessness Institute is dedicated to research and publishing on fear, fearlessness and emotions and motivational forces, in general, as well as critical reviews of such works. Preference is given to works with an integral theoretical perspective.

Cultural Theorist Jean Gebser Meets a Fearologist

R. Michael Fisher,¹ Ph.D.

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Technical Paper No. 114

Abstract

The author, a fearologist, reviews his own engagement with the work of cultural historian and theorist Jean Gebser (1905-1970), and then offers evidence of how important fear (and anxiety) are in the work of Gebser's epochs of history and development of consciousness in our species. The author suggests that more studies will reveal just how important Gebser's work is to finding our way today in the midst of the decline of one epoch in transition ('birth pains') to become another epoch that finally has the potential to truly *not* be motivated by fear as the primary driver.

INTRODUCTION: My Brief History with Jean Gebser

The first blog on the Fearlessness Movement ning that mentions Jean Gebser's (1905-1973) important work² on fear was published in June, 2015.³ I've not written anything significant on his work since

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² For more bio info. go to https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Gebser

³ See Fisher (2015).

then. Nearly five years later, I am writing notes on my social theory of fear and I mentioned Gebser as one of a long list of key “*integral thinkers*” that have been important to the history of integral theory and ideas, many which have greatly shaped my own philosophy over the years.⁴ My study of Gebser has been biased and brief. Yes, in a way Gebser’s work, especially as interpreted (for better or worse) through the integral philosopher, cultural therapist, and theorist Ken Wilber, has been in the background of my thinking and honoring of great evolutionary thinkers since my 30s (I am now 68). Gebser, like Wilber, is a ‘big picture’ theorist and one that history has not yet fully given him the due credit of his great work, mainly because it was published only in German for so long.⁵ In the mid-1980’s Gebser’s greatest work, *The Ever-present Origin*,⁶ was finally made available in English. As a side note, it is fascinating for me as an educator, that Gebser in the early 1930s moved to Spain and “become a senior official in the Spanish Ministry of Education,” according to Wikipedia. Alright, an educator of my kind. Whoa! Would I ever be delighted if we had today, in any country, a person of the depth and scope as a historical cultural thinker like Gebser in a Ministry of Education! Education sorely needs ‘big thinkers’ and fearless futurists to get ourselves out of the rut of 19th century thinking re: curriculum and pedagogy in a 21st century world.

Although later in this paper I’ll return to some reasons why Gebser has been largely ignored (especially in North America), let me state my historical hypothesis. That after WW-II and its traumatic devastation on a near global level, there were more or less only two directions to go in for philosophy (in the widest sense of that term, including in academia but beyond)—(1) to move towards understanding the ‘big’ universal historical, evolutionary and developmental trajectory (grand narrative) of *why* humans ended up in a so-called post-Enlightenment era with the victory of reason over passions and superstition (i.e., fears) and produced a monstrous Third Reich in Germany under Adolf Hitler and, (2) to move towards the opposite direction of another universal big picture of anything to do with histo-

⁴ See Fisher (2020a).

⁵ The same argument was made by Reynolds (2006), p. 255.

⁶ Gebser (1949/1984).

ry, human's development, culture, etc. The former is the direction taken by Jean Gebser and others (often called structuralists⁷) and the latter is the direction taken by postmodernists, in particular, the post-structuralists. In that sense, as an integralist theorist myself, I have studied both and find both directions interesting and useful, but I do have more commitment to the helpful possibilities of the great philosophical and theoretical 'map makers' of the universals of evolution, history, development. My entire Fear Management Systems Theory is based on such structuralist commitments (e.g., Fisher, 2010). Why Gebser was ignored is because the first move to understand universals post-WW-II was very unpopular and has grown even more unpopular overall, especially in postmodern academia.

I have mentioned Gebser, every now and then, going a long way back in my work, but it was always next to and underneath (more hidden) my writing about Ken Wilber's work and/or integral theory in general. In Fisher (2010), my most extensive book on my theory of fear(lessness), I mention Gebser on seven pages, and usually it is just to mention him as an intergral philosopher amongst a list; uniquely, however, in the articulation of a brief history of integral thinkers, McIntosh (2007) called Gebser "Prophet of Integral Consciousness,"⁸ and that alone intrigues the imagination.⁹ I have always been attracted to 'the prophetic' spirit, spiritual or secular, in the texts and leadership, the pioneer-breaking challenges, of many kinds of writers throughout my career.

⁷ Most integral philosophers of recognized status internationally are structuralists philosophers (e.g., Wilber) although each has their own take on how "soft" or how "hard" are those structures of consciousness in the evolutionary 'chain of Being' (or Great Nest of Being). Wilber's notion of "Kosmic habits" is one of great appeal in the soft structuralist camp (e.g., Fisher, 2010, p. 56). Note, most structuralism, according to its rivals, is about "stages" of development and some kind of "hierarchical" attribution of such stages—and, once that label has been slapped on any kind of thinking or theory or philosophy, it is like calling it "sexist," and/or "racist" (e.g., evil) or another such label that makes it politically anathema to the (implied but dubious) morally superior who throw around that labeling without a lot of nuance.

⁸ McIntosh (2007) categorizes Gebser as one of the "*integral canon*" (Fisher, 2010, p. 54).

⁹ McIntosh cited in Fisher (2010), p. 54.

To excite an intellectual moment in this introduction, I'll share what I wrote (Fisher, 2010) re: the juxtaposition of fear research and implications to the integral thinkers (including Gebser):

At FMS-7 [Fear Management System-7; Integral] there is very little (if any) 'fear' projection onto humanity and its evolution (and possibilities). The fearlessness perspective is "transpersonal" or sometimes called "trans-egoic," and "trans-ethnocentric." One's expanding sense of self-identity (and perception) is shifting to a global-centric and/or cosmocentric worldview (*a la* Wilber), that transcends one's historical and cultural roots [and biases]. One can find evidence for this "shift" across the abyss, which earlier I called '*Fear*' *Barrier(s)* in the developmental literature of Jean Gebser, Clare Graves, Abraham Maslow, Robert Kegan, Suzanne Cook-Greuter, Sam Keen, Don Beck, Ken Wilber, and others....FMS-7 *fearlessness* demands we challenge our preconceived 'norm' definitions and meanings of terms and concepts [and worldviews], including our image of ourselves, or our organizations—and in this case, concepts like fear, fearlessness, violence, and human being—are up for grabs. (p. 154)

If readers ponder this quote, it is readily apparent, I argue, that Jean Gebser is critical to understanding a holistic-integral and developmental evolutionary perspective on fear and its management, and on how to best educate about fear in the 21st century. And, we will see, that such a *fear education* (i.e., developing a curriculum and pedagogy that produces a critical literacy on fear and fearlessness) is rather complex. Most avoid thinking about it because of this, and arguably, most avoid thinking about Gebser's work and its value to today—when we are, as Gebser argues (with others) going through an epochal transition (mutation and/or saltation) in consciousness and cultural evolution itself. I find Gebser's contribution really important in our species current confrontation of which path will we head in the great collapse and crises of the day (COVID-19 pandemic just a small symptom of the worst to come)—will we see the 'map' Gebser offers (amongst other integralists) and follow its guidance or will we struggle and panic and/or pretend arrogance that we already know what is best and... well, that's not a good option as far as I am concerned.

Ken Wilber himself has written that Gebser played a big role in his own intellectual development and crafting of Integral Theory *per se*. He and others have also noted that the Gebserians, who are hard core out there in the world, have been quite critical of the Wilberian interpretation of

Gebser.¹⁰ I too, because I am “trained” in the Wilberian interpretation for the most part, am susceptible to similar critiques in the future. But, I now am making a concerted effort to listen to other interpretations of Gebser and to read his original texts as much as I can, at my age and with my other priorities. Wilber has written of Gebser positively, and as one of Wilber’s key interpreters says, Gebser’s impact was critical on Wilber’s view of stages of evolution (and culture):

Gebser’s pioneering work is outstanding and deserves much attention and study, as well as to be sublimely appreciated for its literary beauty....Gebser also had a rich influence on Ken Wilber’s theories, especially in relation to the historical emergence of the structures of consciousness [stages]. (Reynolds, 2006, p. 255)

One key message from Reynold’s mention is that Gebser’s uniqueness was not only his cognitive brilliance and scholarly discipline but his aesthetic and artistic capabilities (he’s was also a poet). For sure, it is a primary attractor to Gebser. Barbara, who is my life-partner and who brought Gebser back to my attention, saw connections—with us as artists. Gebser also was an artist and art historian in his own right and he relied heavily on the arts historically to deduce many of his prophetic insights about the evolution of the mind of humans and their developmental cultural formations (i.e., structures of evolution). This is not the case with most theorists (e.g., like Wilber) who study and map out the stages of human development and culture through time looking for universal truths. Joseph Campbell’s analogous methods, which influenced Carl Jung, were also studies of aesthetics, mythic images and literary stories with those images, based on art and imagination throughout history. This *aesthetic* imaginal (creative-based) preference and integration (from the *arational*) in a dominant field of otherwise overly cognitive (rational, scientific, egoic¹¹) theorizing¹² is welcomed as a

¹⁰ I am not totally up on this literature, but it is substantial, and I suggest readers do their own research to see what the critiques are, what the similarities and differences are in Wilberian Integral Theory and a Gebserian integral theory/approach.

¹¹ The bias I am pointing to is inevitable in the evolution of structures (epochs), according to Gebser (and Wilber et al.), so it ought not be taken as ‘bad’ but as limited (though, it can become pathological in part); and yes, Gebser classifies this under one umbrella structure in the history of human thought, which he labels “Mental: Three-dimensional, Perspectival...egocentric-materialist” (see Synoptic Tables at the back of *The Ever-present Origin*. Wilber calls this stage “Rational-Egoic” often, and it is otherwise known as the Modern epoch. Barbara Bickel and I call it highly phallogentric (i.e., patriarchal and consists of a Dominant (dominating) worldview that is deeply harming Life on this planet). Gebser, thus, offers humanity another stage/epoch of growth and potential that is “ego-free” (amaterial, apsychic)” (and, at Integral-Aperspectival-Four-Dimensional) and the “arational” in his classification of a ‘higher’ evolutionary advance. This latter, is ‘fear-less’ as much as it is

‘balance’ function, in regard to our understanding of reality and our mapping of universal structures in human evolution and development.

In 2015, I made a deeper direct inquiry into Gebser’s work through Muller, a scholar on Gebser, who linked his work to fear as well. I wrote,

I recently came across an abstract from a fellow presenting at the 2014 Jean Gebser conference. I was intrigued with its focus on the **role of fear in cultural evolution** (and consciousness itself). Although the abstract only gives a cursory view of the presumably Gebserian perspective presented on fear, it lays out some strong claims that I think we [fearologists] all ought to examine critically. In short, Gebser is highly regarded as an important philosopher-theorist by many integral thinkers of today, especially Ken Wilber has honored and cited his work. So, here is the abstract which may bring up dialogue among us, notably, there is no discussion of fearlessness with fear in a dialectical sense.

Excerpted from <http://www.gebser.org/conference/>

THE UNKNOWN, FEAR, AND THE UNCANNY

Rick Muller, PhD (2014)

Fear initiates human action. Humans at their core attempt to avoid fear by creating a world of comfort, safety and familiarity. That is why responses to fear, the unexpected and the unknown, are so overwhelming. Research suggests the residual effect of fear lasts longer than that of pleasure among humans. Is this a fundamental biologically encoded reaction? If so it initiates modern humans to move experiences and objects from the mental category of the un-

‘ego-less’—and, that is a saltation of evolution that I am working to promote, since late 1989 and the In Search of Fearlessness Project (for an Integral Age).

¹² Wilber uses the rational cognitivist mode primarily for articulation of his theories but he also uses a trans-rationalist perspective (at times arationalist), which makes his work intriguing to me in particular. Arguably, a lot of Gebser’s philosophical articulation, likewise, is rational-cognitivist mode. Yet, even Wilber can write effectively, and very poetically at times.

known/feared into the mental category of the known. Doing so creates familiarity, safety, protection and the illusion of control. The historical artifacts of this process include rituals, taboos, social and familial structures, belief, dogmas, religion, law and science. All are reactions; all are protections from the ever-present inherent sense of fear, the unknown, the invisible and the ineffable.

To understand modernity or what [Jean] Gebser refers to as the mental rational requires one to have a greater sense of how the archaic/magic contributes to humanity's response to fear. This paper suggests that fear is an initiating factor and an underlying foundation for human choice; one that affects the structuring of community, society, religion, values and ethics. One modern effort to covertly undermine the residual certainty of Gebser's mental rational, of the Enlightenment, of Romanticism, of the Industrial and Scientific revolutions comes from within the mental rational itself. The uncanny, while predominantly mental and psychological in nature, continues to bore out of the core of modernity creating a space for the archaic, magic and mythic attributes to flourish within a fading western mental rational construction of the human world.

The ongoing disintegration of certainty frees the inherent fears from their protective structures to irrupt into individual human consciousness and everyday life. Fear, the unknown, the fear of the unknown and in modernity the fear of the perceived known continues to rattle the foundations of belief, creation, personal and collective behavior. Western anxiety is born of the social and cultural byproducts that were meant to protect humanity from fear. But do these protections and structures actually protect; if so, from what? What occurs when the protective membrane disintegrates, dissipates, becomes transparent? Death?

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counting, finance and economics for the master's degree in nursing program. His most recent publications include using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® and Ignatian Pedagogy Model for Improved Learning in [Jesuit Higher Education](#), May 2014]; Hitting the Financial Knowledge Target in *Nursing Management*, October 2013 and he provided editorial assistance for an article about the current issues confronting Venezuela (April 2014) in *Winds and Waves*, the magazine for the Institute of Cultural Affairs International.

"Fear initiates human action. Humans at their core attempt to avoid fear by creating a world of comfort, safety and familiarity."

The prior blog I posted [also] echoes these kind of claims, as the above quote, (typical of Desh Subba's philosophy of fearism; see my prior blogs), and sets the stage for human culture's use/management of "fear" to continue to motivate us--but in what way does it motivate us? When is it healthy? When is it pathological? How would we know the difference? The latter, is the more important question.

I am not saying fear does not motivate us. I have been writing about the down-side to this, particularly because we tend to (primarily) focus on fear and not fearlessness in history, development and cultural evolutions. If "fear is an initiating factor" and foundation for human choice, as Muller suggests (and Gebser must likely imply), we still have the problem unaddressed in this abstract as to what are we talking about when we use "fear" and is it as complete and integral enough of an understanding (and does it have a deconstruction-reconstruction critique built-in) to be useful to the 21st century and where cultural evolution seems to be going (or where it is perhaps enmeshed in a pathology that will take us all out)... just a few quick thoughts... Someone really needs to study Gebser's work and see what he directly has said about the role of fear and how that supports or doesn't a Subbaian philosophy of fearism. -rmf

I guess five years later, I am finally taking on my own challenge—yes, it is time to study Gebser and fear.

Muller’s is a fascinating comment from the above abstract: “the ever-present inherent sense of fear, the unknown, the invisible and the ineffable.” Okay, “ever-present inherent sense of fear” is being claimed as *the* shaper of all shapers of the evolution of humans and their organizations and cultures. I tend to agree this is accurate. Apparently, it is implied here, that such a claim is Gebserian-based, and it is this issue that is now surfacing as I write today, and explore the Gebser connections to understanding this *ever-present* fear and how that may be related to Gebser’s “ever-present origin” conception and his notion of the *telos* arc of evolution of consciousness and cultures, as humans prepare the way for a jump, a quantum leap—perhaps, to an *Integral Age* (according to Wilber¹³) and concomitantly, a “Fearless Age” (as Subba, 2014, wrote of). To be sure, I do not (nor does Subba, or Gebser) idealize such a leap or such an ideal Age, because all evidence and theory of such ruptures and (r)evolutions are often messy, and ‘two steps forward and one step back’ or ‘one step forward and two steps back’—as wisdom shows these things are fragile and even if we enter a “Fearless Age” not everyone in a population will enter it at the same center of gravity of development. There will be immense resistances and problems still to solve at Integral.

Most recently, and as a final spur to why I wrote this Technical Paper No. 114 on Gebser, is that my life-partner, Barbara Bickel, has picked up on Gebser’s work, especially on his notion of the importance of the *arational*, and she ordered his 1949/1984 book *The Ever-Present Origin*. We are both keen on studying it together. Her story of why she came to Gebser, from a very different direction than mine is to be told as well someday; but now it is time to move on to the connections I wish to make as a fearologist, as if now I am entering a serious conversation with a historical figure and great thinker.

¹³ Example, see Reynolds’ (2006) summary of this Integral Age (Chapter Twelve), of which Gebser is the first theorist to be mentioned who contributed to the understanding of this next evolutionary edge, beyond the Modern era (i.e., Rational-Ego epoch).

This is not the first time as a fearologist I have engaged major thinkers and others.¹⁴ My task is basically to bring a “fearist lens” (*a la* Subba, 2014) to the study of another’s philosophical work and theories, to bring out the essential core of their thinking that involves *fear* (and its derivatives like anxiety, guilt, shame, panic, terror—and ‘fear’¹⁵). I coined fearology as a serious transdisciplinary study of the relationship of fear to life, and Subba had independently founded fearism, because we saw the need to analyze the history of human thought through a fearist lens, in order to reveal fear and its major shaping role, whereby most all other thinkers and writers give it some importance but not to the extent that we believe it ought to be.

BASICS OF GEBSER’S VIEWS

Gebser’s sociocultural theory of evolution is an integral theory of primarily one aspect of reality—cultural evolution. Gebser does not have a well-developed theory of subtle energies, the relationship between psychological stages and transpersonal states, the mind-body problem, the way major methodological families [i.e., epistemologies] are related to each other (to name just a few areas where Wilber excels). This is not to assign fault to Gebser; I am simply pointing out that specific theories that contribute to integral theory of reality often fall far short, in my view, from being complete.¹⁶

This paper is not near adequate to give readers a full picture of Gebser’s ideas, I only give a few examples relevant to my work and Wilber’s work, and then later, to close this paper, I’ll zoom in on the relationship of fear (and anxiety) to Gebser’s work and offer my commentary.

It is noteworthy that from the early start of Wilber’s career of writing about the evolution of consciousness, and cultural evolution,¹⁷ (especially, in his book *Up From Eden*, 1981), the synthesis he pursued was,

¹⁴ Other examples include my fearanalysis of Ken Wilber, Ernest Becker, Carl Jung, Michel Foucault, Otto Rank, Bracha L. Ettinger, etc. These can all be searched on the Internet.

¹⁵ I am speaking about fear-patterning and discourses on fear here and do not take only a disciplinary study or meaning of what fear means or how it is defined by Psychology or Medicine. Fearology is by definition the transdisciplinary study of fear. I have many publications on the problems of defining fear itself. I won’t repeat those here.

¹⁶ According to Esbjörn-Hargens (2010), p. 11.

¹⁷ “Fortuitously, when Ken Wilber was working on his own [first] book about the historical evolution of consciousness in the late 1970s, he came across one of Gebser’s only English-translated essays which had been published in 1972 by the respected theosophist journal

...presented from numerous scholars (such as Cassirer, Neumann, and others), but in particular, the Swiss cultural historian Jean Gebser, who labels this period the archaic structure [or epoch], and according to Wilber, it “corresponds closely without ‘pleromatic-uroboric (level 1).’ They both [Wilber-Gebser] claim that although these evolving apelike hominids [of that epoch] are an extraordinary advance, they actually lived in a subconscious world where [in Wilber’s words] “the Dawn State of Humans was one of dreamy immersion in and oneness with the material and natural world.”....[and like Gebser] Wilber insists [developmentally and theoretically] that although their Eden-like existence may “appear angelic in many ways [i.e., ‘spiritual’], it is the bliss of ignorance, not of transcendence.”¹⁸ (Reynolds, 2004, p. 125)

Reynolds (2004) continues to document the various uses of Gebser’s stages or epochs in building Wilber’s particular terms and classification. At one point Reynold’s wrote, “Importantly, in complete agreement with Gebser, Wilber suggests that [in Wilber’s words] “The first men and women to appear on the earth during these times (about 200,000 years ago) were not just simple hunters and gatherers—they were magicians” (p. 126).¹⁹ Not only do we see the Wilberian-Gebserian connection being drawn out, which Wilber so appreciates the leg-work Gebser had done, but that new syntheses utilizing Gebser’s work and going beyond its limitations was also being demonstrated, and I agree that that is really important to this day. I offer my own synthesis and creative integration of Gebserian thought and yet want to take it further than Gebser could in his time.

Main Currents in Modern Thought (this was the very same journal that had published Wilber’s first essay in 1974). Gebser’s “Foundations of the Aperspectival World” is a provocative essay that shows the power of his pioneering observations, which had delineated the unfolding stages of consciousness in human history....they reframed his [Wilber’s] own observations...” (Reynolds, 2006, p. 256).

¹⁸ This is classically Wilber’s *pre/trans fallacy* critique (from an integral aperspectival worldview) of those who confuse the worldviews and realities of the *pre-egoic* realm and states of consciousness with the *trans-egoic* realm and states; and, we see this distinction (more implicitly perhaps) in Gebser’s linear-ontological developmental (albeit, spiral formation) of evolution of consciousness as well. For example, Gebser doesn’t confuse “ego-less” of the Magic epoch (structure) with “ego-free” of the Integral [much later evolved and matured] epoch or structure (see Gebser’s Synoptic Tables at the back of *The Ever-present Origin*. In other words, see the basic template (model-map) of Wilber’s 8 basic stages from Subconscious (prepersonal) to Self-Conscious (personal) to Superconscious (transpersonal), as his “Great Nest of Being” diagram (e.g., see Reynold’s, 2004, p. 123).

¹⁹ See “Magical Consciousness” defined in the Wilberian-Gebserian synthesis by Reynolds (2006), p. 257).

“They were magicians,” Wilber’s respectful claim (along with others) is pivotal in arcing out the trajectory of human existence by not just looking at the *outer* realities of the behaviors in terms of economic practices of survival, like hunting and gathering (typical of materialists, of Marxists), but to aim deeper into the *interiority* of evolution—into the psyches and soul, of humans evolving through stages and epochs. This interiority is what makes evolution way more exciting, even if it becomes more problematic because it is pursuing truths from an invisible world of the mind itself, of ideas, of thoughts, of emotions. Besides cognitive development, yes, it is worthy to study affect and feelings, and more complex emotions, all are part of a holistic-integral view of evolution. Turns out humans are not as rational as Enlightenment thinkers had wanted to believe. And rightfully, Gebser was a prophetic pioneer in exploring this as his focus on studying the art humans made throughout time (although, he studied other productions as well) brought him closer to their inherent capabilities, their ordinary source in the aesthetic realm of expressions, and it is therein where one can make great insights into the way humans perceive, think, and are motivated—as well, how they had thought in relationship to their world back 200,000 years ago or further (and, this structure of Magical, as Gebser calls it is still functioning to this day, especially in children’s first 7 years). Reynold’s finishes the notion of ‘magician’ that the Wilberian-Gebserian²⁰ conclusions brought:

As ancient [ancestral] hominids emerged from the realms of the archaic and subconscious uroboros, the sense of being a definite separate self unfolds with greater intensity, thus there develops a magical worldview since, in summary, [Wilber’s words] “although the self is distinguished from the natic environment, it remains *magically intermingled* with it.” (p. 126)

Many aspects of this theory of human cultural development intrigue me, including this “magician” stage is “egoless” and “terrestrial” according to Gebser and thus is a stage of great connection to the ‘ways of Nature’ and thus deeply intimate in the wisdom of the Natural Realm as I call it, and therein is a whole set of theorizing to be arrived about the self-fear-Other complex (i.e., ecology of fear) that lurks in this archaic-to-magical transitioning, which I have structured a classification of Fear Management System 1-to-2 at these levels. Yes, we humans living today, even just take

²⁰ For those uncomfortable with terms like Wilberian, of which I would apply to my work, it has been distinguished from lesser preferred terms like “Wilbercentric” or “Wilber exclusive” “but rather a Wilber-based [i.e., Wilberian]...is, built upon the foundation provided by Wilber and his proponents and critics” (Esbjörn-Hagens, 2010, p. 8).

adults for example, we can access this earlier structure consciously, and/or we can be taken-over (almost) by these earlier structures if they overwhelm our Ego functioning (editing) processes—e.g., psychotic experiences are often of this “magical” realm.²¹ Art expression often enters into this early modality of mind and affect and that’s where healing can happen, especially in healing with the Earth (i.e., Gebser’s terrestrial wisdom, or primal wisdom). Indigenous peoples’ are ‘experts’ on this domain, especially because they may have chosen this basic way of tribal life and not been taken over by colonization’s dominant worldview. We start to ask questions about how “fear” is conceptualized, or perhaps, isn’t conceptualized at all and is rather pre-conceptual, apprehensional, only; and thus, we have to take this in when we pronounce our contemporary theories about “fear” and its management/education. Rarely, is this ever taken into account, as I would wish. Later, below I directly deal with Gebser on fear.

So, for now suffice it to say in this very brief intro of Gebser’s ideas (and theory) that I have pointed to a few pertinent aspects in understanding human (and cultural) evolution/development/history. So, we don’t jump on a criticism of Gebser’s work too quickly, or see it as only about history and not about today, let me cite Reynold’s (2006):

One of Gebser’s more significant conclusions, in the words of Georg Feurstein’s authoritative study *Structures of Consciousness* (1987), was that he also saw these structures of consciousness [like Gebser] as being [in Feurstein’s words] “not merely historical relics but active co-constituents of the modern psyche.” [often in our unconscious processes and motivations] This is because the previous structures of consciousness are actually *transcended-yet-included* in

²¹ A larger argument could be made here that around 200,000 years ago appeared the first ‘signs’ of evolution mutating, saltating, or just changing dramatically—whereby, the Natural realm in which humans existed in the archaic epoch was giving rise to a more cogent maturation in which humans were differentiating (sometimes dissociating) from Nature and spending more of their time, energies, consciousness, in a nascent Culture (i.e., Cultural realm)—and, by 10,000 years ago or 5000 years ago (several scholars argue, e.g., see respectively, Four Arrows, 2016; Eisler, 1987) there was a “split” between Natural and Cultural for early ancestors, and I argue that is when “fear” becomes an even more powerful cultural-tool (if you will) in the evolution of the psyche of individuals and collectives. It is a great risk evolution took, via the Hominid line, into Homo line. Fear, apparently, and arguably, is only toxic (traumatic itself) when it is constructed upon Cultural (i.e., the culturalism ideology in which such a worldview tends to make the Natural an enemy). Thus, fear of the enemy (Nature) is our first explosion of fear into toxic forms (e.g., ‘fear’ = culturally modified fear). See Fisher (2010) for more articulation of this evolutionary theory of fear. I’ll be looking for places where Gebser’s studies may have support for my own (integral) fear theory.

humanity's holonic development; therefore, these past waves of awareness are still *psychically active* [e.g., today, seen to be the case in epigenetics theories] in us today. This is another example of how an integral approach can pluralistically include *all of the previous worldviews* that are available to humankind in the spiral of development. (p. 255)

Note, we cannot talk about Gebser's work without talking about the concept of *worldviews* emerging in both the individual and collective units of humanity—that is, developing and evolving on the interiority dimension of the psyche or soul. We have to pay good attention to how these are templates for and build the networks of values, beliefs, rules, religions, ideologies, and behaviors and motivations. This is deep analysis. Worldview analysis (in many diverse forms, not all compatible) has grown over the past few decades to become essential in our study of ways to manage the conflicts of differences that are currently plaguing our world²²—that is, when we don't manage conflict (and fear) very well.

Intolerance of other worldviews (i.e., violence against other worldviews), has been a basis for many theories of toxic-wicked problems we face globally. Although, that's another topic far beyond what I will go into here, it is relevant to mention because Gebser's mapping of worldviews, past and present—and predicting of a future emerging in the now), is critical to educating ourselves about worldviews and to finding ways to use the maps to build tolerance. Intolerance, is of course (as Gebser says himself later in this paper), due primarily to unnecessarily compounding fear (and hope)—that is, fear-based expressions of the various developmental worldviews. Which makes his work intriguing to me as a developmentally-oriented and critical-integral fearologist. Basically, Gebser's worldview of analysis of worldviews in history (i.e., as located in identifiable distinct but interrelated epochs) is a *meta-worldview* (and meta-cognitive) application for clarity and precision in critical analyses. We can know *better* what worldview is operating, if we have the whole developmental map of comparisons, and we can then know *better* which worldview is transitioning to another worldview (with all the struggles), and work with it appropriately (e.g., like developmentally-appropriate curriculum and pedagogy; and so why not developmentally-appropriate management, policies, laws etc.?)—and, this is key to good *transformative* leadership, education, learning theory and practices. Again, actual applications of Gebser's work *per se* in the real wide-world of happenings, is not the goal of this paper to review or even recommend, other than at the level of practically conceptualizing an inte-

²² Within the field of Education, for e.g., see van Kessel et al. (2020).

gral perspective (as alternative to maps from the prior stages of consciousness)—and, that includes an integral perspective on fear and its management/education.²³

Gebser on Fear's Role

Now, to the primary focus of this technical paper. If he is masterful at understanding cultural evolution, then, how does Gebser articulate the nature and role of fear in shaping overall evolution, cultural evolution, psychic development, and overall development and history (e.g., of epochs)? How can his work today provide a potential guidance through the cascading crises we are facing as a species, with near-extinction not far off in the future as many are predicting? Since the beginning of undertaking this short study of Gebser for this technical paper, it is on my mind that Gebser is one of the first powerful Western intellectuals out of Europe to bring an integral perspective to human development, especially in the cultural realm,²⁴ and especially in the early post-WW II years, when humanity was so traumatized by wars and the Holocaust especially. Yes, these were the years of what rightly was constituted “The Age of Anxiety” (beginning in 1941, and carrying on in other expressions since that time, right up to the present). I would call this historically, entry via doors that were closing and doors that were opening. Could we humans recover and forgive this horrid past and atrocities, our violence, our lack of will for peace? Could we humans get beyond the ghosts and terrors that seem to plague us and follow us wherever we go, history being one mess of a story of those terrors—where fear-based motivations still seem to rule, and a higher ‘civilization’ is only idealism? Could we find another way? Could we find another worldview to carry us, from the archaic, to the magical, to the mythical, to the rational, to

²³ Readers might detect that I am a critical theorist/pedagogue, with an integral lens, and a fearlessness perspective—which, is critical of all other lenses and pedagogies that are not so meta-aperspectival in their basic worldview. I am not saying other lenses and worldviews are not valuable (as Gebser also argues)—it is just that they need to be put under a critical meta-theory lens to point to when they have out-grown themselves and turned perhaps even pathological in large part. That’s when the leading-edge of the next evolutionary worldview on the horizon needs to be encouraged, and that’s the kind of *cultural therapia* I am involved in as a grand project, and I’d say that Wilber and Gebser are as well. They are cultural therapists, and I don’t mean pluralism and multiculturalism therapists (who still operate in Rational-Ego consciousness), but they go way beyond that limited conceptualization, into the Integral (or sometimes called “vision-logic”).

²⁴ I think Pitrim Sorokin, a Russian who emigrated to Europe and America for his career in sociology, also is such an integral theorist of great importance and deserves way more attention today.

something post-rational (?) or even post-human(?)—what Gebser called Integral and Aperspectival—his evidence for a new worldview is sitting there in his massive works and insights, and yes, I even think it is appropriate for humans to now consider having learned enough (?) from this long drawn out Age of Anxiety, based on many Ages before, that still seemed riddled with fear as the primary motivator leading to violence and/or ‘evil’ (and to the very understanding of history itself on the affective side of reality). Yes, there is extraordinary possibility of mutation, of saltation, of a quantum leap—call it what you will in the ways of evolution—and, indeed, Gebser saw it, and I see it, and others too—there exists room still for a culture of fearlessness, a new psychology, a new paradigm, a new society and evolution to a new mature level of existence—as Integral Theory also predicts (e.g., Ken Wilber’s work). Of course, readers will be familiar with many versions of what I am describing here within the genre that is most popular (at least, in North America since the 1960s-70s) of a “New Age.”

Gebser’s Aperspectival (Arational) ‘Breakthrough’ Worldview

In the sense of change, transformation, evolutionary possibilities, we have to include Gebser amongst the many who have promoted a “New Thought” consciousness, and/or a “New Age.”²⁵ The former is about a *new way* (paradigm) of thinking more comprehensively, systems-based, globally or cosmically-based—on the way to *wholeness* (i.e., integral, a vision-logic beyond rational logic). Individuals have accessed these new higher thought structures at times, but whole societies have yet been able to develop them so that the vast majority in a population actually operates daily from the higher levels. With help from Wilber’s theorizing prior (Wilber relied heavily on Gebser), I have laid out the theoretical trajectory of societies slowly moving from early *fear management systems* (i.e., means of finding security in an insecure world) as a ‘natural’ and somewhat predictable continuum of evolution’s way to develop healthy systems in a sometimes challenging world/environment.²⁶ Remembering the principle of development

²⁵ For those of you who have great problems taking “New Age” thought and theorizing seriously, I am also a critic of much of where this movement has gone in the last four decades or so, but I would highly recommend you at least find some of the wisest writing on “New Age” in the works of (for e.g.) Ken Beittel, David Spangler and/or Mark Satin (e.g., see Satin, 1976/2015).

²⁶ Recently, a neuroscientist, Lisa Feldman Barrett, in an interview said that hundreds of millions of years ago, “The brain [itself] evolved in an arms race between predatory and prey”—which I call, an “ecology of fear” as the first meta-level of motivational template upon which the evolution of life exists. If one wanted to go further, as perhaps a physicist may argue, you could say “Intelligence” is the result of and the cause of the interplay of an

here, is one where earlier structures/systems eventually are not able to meet the demands of growth or quality within the prevailing environmental conditions—and, thus the next stage(s) of growth arise from that prior foundation, taking the best and leaving behind the worst (failed) aspects. And typically, when in a healthy process, they *transcend and include*²⁷ the prior intelligences—and, in this case of my interest it is the Defense Intelligence system. So, the higher matured fear management systems (beyond the norm) are always available—they are *apriori* ontological (evolved) “structures” or “memes” as some theorists call them. They are genetic-cultural memory systems for managing fear and they have evolved continually since the beginning of Life itself (4 billion years ago) to better develop ways to manage fear better. I have called this Defense Intelligence over-all²⁸—that’s where I ultimately locate ‘Fear’ Studies and “fear education.”

So, now you readers have the basic principles, of which Gebser also adopted and validated in his own studies of how stages (epochs) grow and decay and change and (often painfully) transition into new stages—that is, into higher order systems and principles by which consciousness and cultures

‘arms race’ between chaos (entropy) and order (negentropy). For interview with Barrett go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nXZhLHsg7sE> (Oct. 17, 2020).

²⁷ At stake here, implicitly, is the issue of: What is progress? *Transcend and include* is the most repeated phrase of philosopher Ken Wilber, because he wants us to remain accurate in understanding development and evolution as ‘hierarchical’ (or preferably, holarchical), yet, there is no support in his theory for evoking a necessary pathological hierarchy understanding where ‘higher’ stages (or epochs) are absolutely better than other ‘lower’ stages. Each stage depends on each other, more or less, and each is part of one whole intelligence and no stage therefore is to be rejected or demeaned (e.g., Wilber, 1995). Gebser’s (1949/84) work also follows this basic ethical principle and says “rendering whole” is the characteristic feature of Integral (see Synoptic Tables). Also, note, that such a principle as transcend and include however, is not reducible to an eclectic syncretic radical pluralism and relativism—but that’s another complicated topic where one can explore on their own to see how the distinction of pluralism, as an evolutionary advance is transcended and included (in part) in the next stage (epoch) of Integral (Aperspectival, Arational).

²⁸ I’ve long argued that Emotional Intelligence as it has been conceived (e.g., Daniel Goleman and others before him), with its great popularity, is unfortunately under-theorized in evolutionary systems thinking; and especially, because it has not acknowledged the underpinning upon which it exists as Emotional Intelligence, and that is *Defense Intelligence* (see Fisher, 2010). I also have other models and theories based on an integral approach to understanding Fear (meta-motivationally with Love and Freedom), and as not merely a feeling or emotion and thus, not just another “emotion” as Emotional Intelligence dogma continues to pedal. A revisionist “fear education” is so important today, and yet, it is so far behind the demands of the times. My dedication is to change this and re-prioritize educational curriculum and pedagogy for the 21st century—upon, which fearlessness as paradigm for that change is crucial. So far, educators typically have not picked up on my initiatives to support this actually happening in our societies and school systems.

carry on and evolve further—endlessly, or so it seems there is no ‘end’ at all in evolution. There is a dialectic of progress that Gebserian-Wilberian theorists (all integralists) more or less agree upon, where some good changes happen that really emancipate the human condition and some really bad changes happen too. Always, one with the other—nothing ever moves straightforward without problems. Evolution is a series of mistakes, and some are very costly, but the direction is generally good. So says the evolutionary dialectician, at least. Gebser is one of those, and so am I. Not everyone sees evolution this way, and there certainly are more and more skeptics (*via* postmodernism, poststructuralism) of any such “progress” view—and, that raises questions about the very nature of political and educational thought as in “progressivism.” We are in a transition of a mess says Gebser.

We moderns have enjoyed the benefits of the Rational (Perspectival) epoch in evolutionary history, and now it is ending, decaying, and we are as a whole not happy to hear that. We thought (since the W. Enlightenment and rule of Reason) that humans were at the top of their game and/or becoming close to it and that societies and life-styles would all improve and freedom would flow, we would be free of fear, want, and tyrannies. Well, no such ideal society has shown up in the 21st century. Things are looking pretty grim, and so people are scrambling to deal with the cynicism of progress (i.e., W. Enlightenment tenets and values) and/or they are extra optimistic (hopeful) and search for ‘new’ alternatives in the past epochs of human history and evolution—e.g., a powerful return to Mythic, Magical, for e.g., which often comes into a lot of New Age thinking in popular culture. That search for the alternative is a drive that will continue as we go deeper into the death of the Rational epoch we moderns have learned to identify with and created our worldview. But remember, as I mentioned earlier, Rational Perspectival is Egoic and has its limitations, if not today, it has its pathologies which could take us all down. Gebser’s map however is there for helping us understand the architectures and dynamics of all the epochs but especially he asks us to understand the Perspectival (Rational) because that’s the most dangerous one in terms of power to destroy AND power to spring us forward into the next epoch in line—the Aperspectival.

So what is Aperspectival relative to Perspectival (and, relative to prior forms of consciousness and modalities of cognition and affect, and dreaming²⁹)? Yet, before diving into this one thread of many in the complex

²⁹ Although it is a topic beyond this paper, it is worthy to note that Gebser (1949/84) does utilize a relative scale and reference for his distinctions of the various epochs and their pre-

Gebserian network of ideas, it is important to say out front that a big attraction (for both Barbara and I) to his writing on consciousness structures, biocognitive to cultural evolution itself, is that he is a *thinker-writer-artist*, not just a rational historian, social scientist or scholarly cultural theorist. One could argue he is an *artist* first and foremost,³⁰ and that's what Barbara and I are as well; yet, artistry is a type of artworking and is not merely about Art in the capital letter (and material-economic) sense, meaning not just about aesthetic appeal, or decoration, or entertainment and other Art-World happenings³¹ but rather about the very *depths of arts* (i.e., creation-makings) and their role in attention, perception, learning, magic, myth, ritual, evolution, development, consciousness, culture and healing and liberation—*via* practices of restoration and transformation.

Having delineated with great detail and scholarship the Structures of Consciousness and their Epochs in history of human evolution (i.e., with a cultural focus), Gebser ends up with five major structures/epochs:

Archaic
Magic
Mythical
Mental
Integral

Based on extensive data and evidence, they are categorical orienting generalizations, somewhat arbitrary (and limited), named (always inadequately so), by which they *represent* (map) an unfolding of consciousness itself

dominant consciousness structure and outcomes—that is, he bases evolution of consciousness upon relative states of dreaming (e.g., Archaic is related to “*deep sleep*” and Magical is related to “*sleep*” which Mythic is “*somewhat dreamlike*” and so forth; this is discussed briefly also in Reynolds (2006), p. 257. “Dreaming” takes on an important role in the work of Barbara Bickel, see citations in References and has roots in the work of pagans regarding the “magical” and “politics,” e.g., see Starhawk (1982).

³⁰ According to Reynold's (2006), “Although Gebser was also a well-known poet laureate who presented his arguments in a gifted and articulate manner, his conclusions and meticulous scholarship was thoroughly grounded in well-presented archeological, anthropological, and historical evidence. Consequently, he presented a *reconstructive* [post-postmodern] theory of ‘emergent evolution’ that chronicles the historical ‘mutations’ that can be quantified or summarized as the various ‘structures’ or ‘modalities’ of consciousness evolution” (pp. 256-57).

³¹ *Artworking* is a notion adopted from the artist-psychoanalyst-activist Bracha L. Ettinger and the basic processes of trance and arts-based inquiry to trauma and general social change (e.g., Bickel, 2020). For further applications of our way of working in/with arts, spirituality and activism regarding “art for a New Age” (e.g., Fisher & Bickel, 2006) see also for e.g., Bickel & Fisher, 1993; Fisher & Bickel, 2007, 2015; Fisher, 2013).

through at least these five major stages (with sub-stages that Wilber tends to bring forward). In this paper, as I mentioned earlier, I will only deal with the basics of very basics of the *Mental* and *Integral* so as to understand just how radical of a time we are in now in modern history with the decay and ending of the *Mental* and the painful birthing (potential) of the *Integral*. I'll also end this paper with a short application of Gebser's theory re: the best ways to use the Magic(al).

Okay, back to Aperspectival in the *Integral* structure and how is it defined and related to the other structures and what Gebser calls "forms of realization and thought." Drawing from one of his synoptic tables we get the following evolutionary spectrum he presents:

1. Archaic: – originary mode³²

2. Magical: – empathy & identification *via* hearing – **Pre-rational**

3. Mythical: – imagination & utterance, contemplation & voicing – **Irrational**

4. Mental: - conceptual & reflection, seeing and measuring – **Rational**

5. Integral: concretion & integration, verition and transparency – **Arational**

[Note: I have added the 'fear barriers' as dashed lines between these structures/epochs on this continuum of evolutionary development, because that is my particular interest; however, for basic purposes here, I believe it is useful to draw such lines, which Gebser does not, to indicate a dynamic level of 'difficulty' in transcending and including, which is part of evolution of stages/levels, and thus, the degree of difficulty to move from Archaic to Magical is very significant, like a 'jump' (a saltation, not merely a mutation—to use Gebser's terms); and remember, there is an ontogenic parallel to this macro-evolution in the micro-development of a child as it

³² There is typically, in W. (white male) theorists, this rather mute descriptive veracity for the "Archaic"—and, I suggest this needs remedy, within which, an Indigenous worldview (e.g., Jacobs, 1998; Four Arrows, 2016; Fisher, 2018) is foregrounded much more than is typical under the lens of the colonizer's imaginary (W. dominant worldview). "Primal awareness" is as good of a term as any, I think, for resurrecting this Archaic structure—which of course, also is related intimately with the Magical structure in Indigenous people's of the 'old ways.' Many argue, as do I, the very notion of *Integral* needs to be Indigenized and Fearlessnessized (e.g., see Fisher & Four Arrows, 2020).

goes through its own periods of growth of consciousness). The larger difficulty is shown between Mythical and Mental and the very most difficult is a double barrier of lines above, which are porous as well, but they are much more ‘guarded’ and dense and only the most persistent set of traits and conditions can make it through this wall (i.e., fear barrier) to finally access and nurture Integral.³³

So, we now are given a mapping of the five forms of realization and thought (to use Gebser’s terms) for how humans have evolved these forms and ways of thinking, with/in the structures of consciousness and the accompanying worldviews they are expressing. The form of realization is intriguing in that it is difficult to define exactly what Gebser means, and yet we see in his synoptic table (above) that he does make a big deal about correlating the development of our most notable sense organs *per se* as ways of perceiving and communicating with the environment—so, for e.g., “seeing” is fundamental to the Rational (i.e., Mental) and he writes a lot about this stage of evolution and modernity itself whereby for a long time “eyes” and the “visual” have and still dominate our forms of realization (and, I would add: forms of identity). Again, I won’t be able to describe this further, but most everyone living in a so-called post-industrial society is well aware of the “images” that bombard us every day, of which virtual reality (digital world) is totally made of images (i.e., “seeing”). There is a long slow history to this take-over domination of eyes over the other senses, and Gebser has a complicated and important theory about what this has done to us, and how it has impacted our lives, especially, how it has impacted growing anxiety (fear) levels (to toxic intensities) as a species overall.³⁴ I’ll come back to that later below.

³³ At this point, I have not digested enough of Gebser’s work to articulate further his views on such notions of ‘difficulty’ as I frame it here. Albeit, I like his discussion of “the conquest and overcoming” notion that is a struggle he points out in ancient literature (for e.g., with Dionysius Areopagita) and the “violence” that goes with consciousness stages or epochs and cultural upheavals (Gebser, 1949/84, p. 255). However, Wilber (1995), for e.g., is typically much more explicit in theorizing about such difficulties (i.e., out-and-out conflict due to domination-subordination dynamics, and sometimes ‘wars’) between the stages/levels/epochs when it comes to understanding the complexity of the transcend and include principle—and, the circumstances of real change and transformation vertically especially, as in these five Gebserian epochs. I show, from a slight different angle, these theoretical (and phenomenological) ‘fear’ barriers in Fisher (2010, p. 48).

³⁴ Barbara Bickel (pers. comm., Oct. 18, 2020) suggested that the seeing and image bombardment is not all ‘bad’ and another evolutionary perspective on this domination is that it is a necessary one because of the macro-level “conflict between word and images” as argued by Shlain (1998). Images *contra* word-domination in language development processes has the opportunity to re-gain the way of the “Goddess” and a closer embodied reality overall (i.e., more feminine).

The Mental (Rational) thus, for Gebser, is Three-dimensional as a worldview and Perspectival in terms of relationships of Self-Space-Time. I cannot overstate how critical his theory is in terms of this work on the psychological and cultural development of our species with the changing (evolving) development of dimensionality in relation to space-time concepts and phenomena. He concludes that the Rational is a hard fought and complex ‘arrival’ of a potentially powerful three-dimensional way to see and think but that it is still Spatial -obsessed and Abstractly temporal (meaning, basically, humans in Rational Mental worldview are quite thrown around and ruled, so to speak, by their abstraction of time (e.g., clocks) and *perspectivalism*. The latter is the focus here, whereby, to be a perspectival thinker and seer, creates a sense that ‘your one perspective’ (i.e., vanishing point-based 3-dimensionality bias) is the (near) *only one* perspective on reality worth having. It is the most advanced, so goes this way of thinking—and, that is when a healthy perspectival form becomes over-inflated into an ideology (toxic form). This often leads to violent difficulties when one encounters the differences and diversities of other perspectives. The problem is socio-political in that we most now all live in cities, nearly on-top-of-each-other and have each our perspectivalist bias in terms of reality, truth, values, beliefs, etc. A lot of conflict is easily generated, but the Rational is supposedly able to have us be more objective and thus more scientific, and thus more modern, and thus more wise(?) Well, the evidence of history shows that the Rational has not solved most of the really challenging problems of social order and morality and caring for the planet earth appropriately, etc. Remember, this thread here I am exploring re: Gebser is the kind (quality) of relationship the *self has to space-time*.³⁵ The Mental Rational Perspectival world is in decay and transitioning, because as a structure, with its forms of thinking (and seeing), there is not sufficient capacity for needed real solutions (real growth and maturation) to enable the analysis and solving of the very problems that much of the Rational

³⁵ I am playing nascently with a type of spatio-temporal fearanalysis (like psychoanalysis) that Gebser offers, especially in his descriptions and analysis of space-time in the Perspectival modality. This is exciting, and would go well beyond the psychoanalysis of Freud and his students and later developments—perhaps, we can find in Gebser (at least) a 21st century Integral psychoanalysis? The hint: what happens if we replace Mother-Father for Space-Time (as analogous)? How do humans develop with/in these types of matrices? I don’t know anyone who has yet constructed a spatio-temporal psychoanalysis (*a la* Integral). Also, note, this spatial-temporal relationality is highly alterable (fluid) when under the influence of various forms of dreaming and artworking (see f.n. 29 & 31).

creates.³⁶ Gebser's most basic definition of "*Perspectival Thinking*" can be somewhat derived from quoting him describing this type/form of thinking (and, its architectural underbelly of a type of worldview) [note: Gebser argues more precisely there are three sub-Mental structures within the Rational Perspective (Mental)³⁷]:

We first employed the term "perspectival thinking" to suggest a distinction between this form and what we called the "aperspectival form" of realization. But it later became evident that the concept of perspectivity has been applied in a variety of ways, as for example by G. Teichmüller who refers to "perspectival time" as being primarily [linear] false time and for his part aims at a restoration of timelessness—that is, a retrogression.³⁸ Jaspers also touches upon this issue while speaking of an individual's "world image" [*aka* worldview] as a given "individual perspective"³⁹ or "individual enclosure." Graumann has recently defended a "psychology of perspective" [i.e., perspectivalism] (1960) although his critique of our concept fails to recognize that the concepts should not be psychologized since it is an expression (or phenomenon) of the mental struc-

³⁶ To be clear, any integral theory does not place the source of all problems on the worldview structure (e.g., Rational) but also acknowledges the major role that the environmental conditions (the Other) plays in shaping the challenges, problems, and solutions.

³⁷ See, for e.g., Gebser (1949/84) "Oceanic or circling thinking" and "paradoxical thinking" and "perspectival thinking" (p. 252).

³⁸ The distinction of a progressive advance towards "timelessness" and/or a "retrogression" is substantively important, as Wilber argues, but as I am also making sense of the spatio-temporal spectrum built into a threat of Gebser's theory. To be specific, Gebser also makes the distinction re: "timeless" as an emphasis in the Magical epoch and consciousness structure but then has "Time-Free" for the Integral structure. I have earlier argued that is significant as the distinctions upon what Wilber calls a pre/trans fallacy argument (cf. f.n. 11). Further, with Luke Barnesmoore, I have been very interested for the past few years in developing more theorizing around notions of time-space dimensions and fear management theory (e.g., see Fisher & Barnesmoore, 2018).

³⁹ Albeit, far beyond the scope of this paper, herein is the challenge of how to define *worldview*, and although Four Arrows (2016) offers a post-colonial way, there are other significant ways that he has not treated in his own theorizing, and of which, I think need to be integrated (*via* a complementarity) to up-grade his view (with its partial truths). Gebser is offering a good point here to both acknowledge the W. tendency to make "worldview" an individual psychologized perspective and, to critique that as well, as Gebser does in the rest of the quote (p. 255). I agree with both Four Arrows and Gebser as critiques of the Jasperian (and W. European) conceptualization of worldview(s). However, Four Arrows has not yet dealt with the structures of consciousness approach to worldview conceptualizations (and theories about worldviews). He would need an Integral up-grade and an understanding of a Gebserian distinction of perspectivity re: worldviews and aperspectivity re: worldviews. There's room for more work in this area as we conceive of the potential of an Integral Age (Culture), the latter, which is not part of the Four Arrows' vision, at this point.

ture. Ortega y Gasset, speaking as an *espectador* or “*spectator*” associates his *perspectiva particular* (personal perspective) with truth, subsuming it into the trinity of a visual, intellectual, and evaluative perspective where not just real and imagined, but also particularly desired and dreamed of things are united.

Our [Gebserian] concept of perspectivity has as little to do with such a definition—and its application of spatializing concepts to mythical-psyche phenomena—as with Jasper’s “enclosure.” And there is yet a further concept of perspective that could give rise to misunderstandings, namely Louis Locher’s introduction of the concept into projective geometry to explain the Moebius strip. (pp. 255-56)

For many pages, Gebser sorts through examples of perspectivity (Rational) and its growing discontents in other examples, where he is attempting to show the evidence for a transitioning to *aperspectivity* (Integral Arational). And, he writes overall in summary of the “Perspectival World” (aka worldview):

Although already shaped in the Mediterranean world of late antiquity, the perspectival world began to find expression about 1250 AD in Christian Europe. In contrast to the impersonal, pre-human, hieratic, and standardized sense of the human body—in our sense virtually non-existent—held by the Egyptians, the Greek sensitivity to the body had already evidenced a certain individuation of man. But only toward the close of the Middle Ages did man gradually become aware of his body as a support for his ego. And, having gained this awareness, he is henceforth not just a human being reflected in an idealized bust or miniature of an emperor, a philosopher, or a poet, but a specific individual such as those who gaze at us from a portrait by Jan van Eyck. The conception of man [re: Perspectival Rational] is based on a conception of the world and the environment as an object... [i.e., an “I” looking at and manipulating objects⁴⁰]. (p. 11).

Now, to Aperspectival, the fascinating, nascent, rare, and fragile consciousness structure (and worldview) yet to establish itself (evolve) with

⁴⁰ One might say, the more positive side of this advance of Perspectival over prior stages of pre-perspectival thinking is that a deeper “subjectivity” awareness (identity of self) is a bonus to the human experiencing, and I don’t doubt that—however, there are nuances to when the “subject” becomes just another “object” as well—but, that’s too complex of a discussion for here. I don’t want to make objectification processes ‘bad’ in this theory, nor does Gebser do so, unlike the common postmodern attitude to try to make everything valued by eschewing objectivizing and pursue subjectivizing everything *in extremis*—that often is an excessive and dangerous move (e.g., subjectivist politics and identity politics).

any ‘common’ veracity in human societies historically, at this point.⁴¹ Wilber (1998), a *postmodern* theorist (and integralist)⁴² offers an important evolutionary and developmental picture to situate “integral-aperspectival” thinking as part of postmodern thought and methods. This is not by any means a usual interpretation, but I find it compelling:

Postmodern philosophy is a complex cluster of notions that are defined almost entirely by what its proponents *reject* [i.e., it is a negative philosophy]. They reject foundationalism, essentialism, and transcendentalism [which Wilber does not]. They reject rationality, truth as correspondence, and representational knowledge. They reject grand narratives, metanarratives, and big pictures of any variety [i.e., universal truths, generalizations]. They reject realism, final vocabularies, and canonical description. Incoherent as the postmodern theories often sound (and often are), most of these “rejections” stem from three core assumptions:

1. Reality is not in all ways pre-given, but in some significant ways is a construction, an interpretation (this view is often called “constructivism”); the belief that reality is simply given, and not also partly constructed, is referred to as “the myth of the given.”
2. Meaning is context-dependent, and contexts are boundless (this is often called “contextualism”).
3. Cognition must therefore privilege no single perspective [as *Perspectival* does] (this is called “integral-aperspectival”). (pp. 120-1)

⁴¹ “Yellow: Integrative [*aka* Integral]—“Life is a kaleidoscope of natural hierarchies (hologarchies), systems, and forms. Flexibility, spontaneity, and functionality have the highest priority. Differences and pluralities can be integrated into interdependent, natural flows. Egalitarianism is complemented with [critical discernment of] natural degrees of ranking and excellence [i.e., verticality]. Knowledge and competency should supersede power, status, or group sensitivity [over-communalism]. The prevailing world order is the result of the existence of different levels of reality (memes) [worldviews] and the inevitable patterns of movement up and down the dynamic spiral. Good governance facilitates the emergence of entities through the levels of increasing complexity (nested hierarchy). 1 percent of the population, 5 percent of the power” (Wilber, 2000, pp. 11-12).

⁴² So is Gebser, and so am I. My entire ‘Fear’ Studies project (e.g., fearology) is based in postmodernity (not as ideology) but as a critical philosophy *after modernism* and pointing the way to Integral (*a la* Gebser)—i.e., pointing the way along the path of Fearlessness (to at least, FMS-7+). Typically, most people who have not adopted and/or evolved to embrace postmodernity will tend to find my fear theorizing overly tedious, complex, or simply, not practical—they may even find it simply not attractive or even offensive—a threat to their worldview of and imaginary of “fear.”

The assumption of Wilber's definition is that one can be practicing a healthy-integrative-holistic postmodern approach or an unhealthy one.⁴³ Most postmodernists, according to Wilber (and I agree) are only utilizing the 1. and 2. of the above, and missing the 3rd. The postmodernists tend to eschew anything Integral with a passion. Again, Wilber is rare not to be so rejecting of all three components, albeit, he has his own near fetish "rejections"⁴⁴ as an integral philosopher (aperspectivalist).

The decay and decline for Gebser of the modernist (and still lingering postmodernist's⁴⁵) Perspectival is many things, but it is surely due to the *objectification* tendency of perspectivism (as ideology) that grew into a toxic, exaggerative and dissociative form⁴⁶ of way of knowing and thinking, as well as identity and way of living. Gebser (1949/84) noted: "The over-emphasis on space and spaciality that increases with every century since 1500 is at once the greatness as well as the weakness of perspectival man [sic]" (p. 22). He also called this exaggerative tendency "ego-hypertrophy" of the "I" perspective (p. 22), and any social creature like humans, cannot well function on that imbalance with the "We" perspective and/or "It" perspective (*a la* Wilber) (and Gebser agrees⁴⁷).

⁴³ Note, I don't want to misconstrue Gebser's view, because it is not by default that Integral is more healthy necessarily just because it operates on an Aperspectival Arational modality; it too can have its pathologies—often, as traces from the earlier structures where pathologies were still lurking and got integrated into the new stage/level or epoch. That said, the Integral consciousness structure is less fear-based (significantly)—by a 'quantum leap' and thus relative to all the rest of the structures which are generally (theoretically) more fear-based, yes, Integral is likely to be a healthier overall structure and produce concomitantly less problems for humanity—however, we can predict that as the Integral evolves so will all the currently wicked global problems, putting enormous pressures on Integral (perhaps, even to the point of twisting its best attributes to end up coming out to be inadequate for the times).

⁴⁴ Albeit, a critic of most everything, Wilber is classically at his best when he is critiquing postmodernist-types (and Eco-types) and their philosophical contradictions—and, no more is this demonstrated by Wilber in full force than in his rejection rant against "flatland" (ontologies) (e.g., see Wilber, 1996, pp. 336-37).

⁴⁵ Most postmodernists (and poststructuralists, post-colonialists) are, according to Wilber, still operating from a center of gravity in Mental (Rational) while they assert that are not and/or they assert they have out-grown it. Wilber is a rare postmodernist. Point being, in the integral developmental schema, modernism is always lingering even in the postmodern era and in institutional and individual 'cultures,' 'values' and 'psyches.'

⁴⁶ A sense of dis-unity, breaking apart of the whole accompanies this and with that a growing angst, anxiety, dread—that is, fear-patterning (Gebser, 1949/84, p. 18).

⁴⁷ Gebser (1949/84) wrote: "As to the perspectival attitude, it is thus possible to maintain that the domination of space which results from an extreme perspectivization [3D] upsets and unbalances the 'I'. In addition, the one-sided emphasis on space, which has its extreme

Gebser then proceeds to unwind his theory of anxiety/fear and how the unbalance of spatiality (“I” perspectival) created a dis-ease with time (temporality)—with the result of a chronic disabling fear-based condition (i.e., addiction) to trying to save, rescue time—including one’s time-based-self-perspective and mortality—all became a terrorizing processes. We tend to ‘scare ourselves to death,’ as the saying goes.⁴⁸ Insecurity magnifies in this late-Perspectival to the point of a death-making culture and way of life, what Gebser called “the most destructive of the stigmas of our age: the universal intolerance that prevails...the fanaticism to which it leads” (p. 23). For example, the Trump era in the U.S. Presidency is perhaps a good case of the *transitional* moment in the way of governance of an old order trying to hang on within the Perspectival worldview and a new order trying to birth itself, against a lot of resistance forces. And if Trump is that new-order type of governing transition leader, surely, there is a lot of past pathology being carried with it that remains embedded in the fear-based intolerance that so characterizes Trump and his minions. At the same time, as I point out in my new book (theoretically), Trump has incited the extreme opposite twin on the spiral to also arise in the form of an archetype—ready for frontal battle, and that is, the Marianne Williamson bid for the presidency (*a la* Integral⁴⁹), although she had to drop out of the Democratic race early in 2020 (see Fisher, 2020b). It is not surprising to me, based on a Gebserian fear-analysis of the end of the Perspectival, that Williamson promotes a Love over Fear doctrine as her spiritual and practical agenda.

Gebser then proceeds to analyze modern art movements, within the context of art history, to show the Aperspectival (e.g., in Picasso’s many famous abstract, cubist, works). He also cautions readers, that any such theory of aperspectival is subject to inherent problems because its emergence is rare, fragile, and difficult to totally predict because of the biases of the lens of the Perspectival, the latter the modality (Rational) most of us pursue the

expression in materialism and naturalism, gives rise to an ever-greater unconscious [shadow] feeling of guilt about time....” (p. 22).

⁴⁸ I have found several writers using this (e.g., Cohl, 1997), often with great insights into the human condition but arguably, such a claim is particularly appropriate to, if not stereotypical of, the Mental epoch (in Gebser’s schema).

⁴⁹ Marianne Williamson’s campaign textbook (and, it will continue to be her guide in politics) is entitled “*Politics of Love*” which is based on her vision and policies that are aimed at what she has called both “holistic” and “integrative” politics for the 21st century. No other politician (political leader-activist) has produced such a book that I know of and also ran for office simultaneously. It is historically a ‘quantum leap’ I suggest of an Integral consciousness structure, pointing the way to a sustainable, healthy and sane future. Albeit, the pointing does not make a successful implementation. We’ll see in the coming years...

very study of the Integral with. That’s a methodological problem, but it is also a problem because, he wrote,

Aperspectivity, through which it is possible to grasp and express the newly emerging consciousness structure, cannot be perceived in all its consequences—be they positive or negative—unless certain still valid concepts, attitudes, and forms of thought are more closely scrutinized and clarified. Otherwise we commit the error of expressing the “new” with the old and inadequate means.... (pp. 28-29)

As I have pointed out earlier, Integral Aperspectival and Arational are practically graspable and worth charting, even if it is a structure rather ephemeral, relatively speaking, and difficult to even recognize (i.e., interpret accurately). It is rare in occurrence. Yet, Gebser does us a favor by his synoptic tables of characteristics. I have mentioned, that for me, the most interesting in terms of *fear education* theorizing is his noting that Integral is “fear-free” (and, space-free, time-free)—and, that’s phenomenal and potent in potential for the human species—for consciousness—for culture. It would be a (r)evolution indeed. I have presented at times a notion of a burgeoning “Fearlessness Psychology” as a replacement for the fear-based Psychology⁵⁰ of the Mental Rational; but this is all still quite speculative. Our troubled world needs to have a sane and thoroughly justifiable ‘map’ for where to go now, as so many things are in chaos and its hard to decide the best way to go. Gebser offers help.

Gebser’s *Magical* Structure: Future Restorative Learning

As well as the general interest I have in Gebser’s map of the *spectrum of consciousness*,⁵¹ there is his specific detailing of the architecture of the five structures and epochs, as I mentioned above. I wish to give some attention to the basics of the Magic (Spaceless, Timeless) and template for a natural “unity” basis for thinking, valuing and behaving. It is the zone of the “terrestrial” here which Gebser relates to its consciousness as much like “*sleep*” where there is no division of a solid “I” yet, and one can shape-shift into all kinds of characters in dreaming and environments and perspectives and narratives overlap and spontaneously and creatively evolve. It’s a dra-

⁵⁰ Fisher (2020c). See also a fearlessness-based paradigm and pedagogy to (r)evolutionize Education (e.g., Fisher, 2011).

⁵¹ Due credit for this conception (coinage) goes to Wilber (1977/82).

matic space and time, without space and time, as far as dreaming is concerned. The Magical consciousness is defined, further by Reynold's (2006) interpretation summary from Gebser:

Magical consciousness- is when humanity's rudimentary self-sense begins to emerge with the rise of images and symbols (and the probable rise of protolanguage), yet it's still based in a visceral and *emotional fusion* of self and nature....there's a desired manipulation of the environment by magic or magical action (including rudimentary rituals [he gives e.g.'s from early cave paintings in old Europe] (p. 257)

Remember that this *raw* definition is incomplete, it is somewhat *abstracted* out of the lived reality of both the past, when the Magical structure (i.e., "pre-rational" as Gebser calls it⁵²) was predominant on earth, and the present when the Magical structure is integrated (more or less) with all the other structures, making an amalgam combination with 'new' types of Magical expressions, never mind the uniqueness of its expression in unique individuals (e.g., Starhawk⁵³). Likewise, the *arational* (Bickel, 2020) is also conjugating 'new' types.⁵⁴

I am most curious (along with Bickel) of the relationship of artworking to magical consciousness *via* the arational modality, like imaginative play (trance) etc. We currently conduct regular 2.5 hr sessions on using spontaneous discipline in "creation making" to help form the basis for communal

⁵² Gebser (1949/84), p. 146.

⁵³ It is worth looking at some female world leaders, e.g., Marianne Williamson, and Starhawk, both politically-engaged spiritual eco-activist types with large followings today, and one of the things they have in common (amongst their definite differences) is their American upbringing and schooling as Jewish, and their inter-spiritual tolerance along with their heavy emphasis on, and re-framing (*a la* Integral) a version of "magical" and "miracles." These magical-oriented leaders, drawing from the Magical consciousness structure, have co-evolved with that structure into contemporary environments in intriguing and critical ways; I highly recommend their work; and, likewise, but again, in quite a different formation, my colleague Four Arrows has done similar work with the "magical" via Indigenizing and interrelating that with hypnosis and meta-cognitive practices (e.g., see his theory of CAT-FAW/N in Fisher, 2018).

⁵⁴ Bickel's latest definition: "The arational, as theorized by Gebser, is an aperspectival form of consciousness that includes the body, emotions, senses, intuition, imagination, art-making, the mystical, spiritual and relational, alongside the pre-rational, irrational and the rational (Gebser, 1985)" (pers. comm., Oct. 18, 2020).

restorative and healing practices.⁵⁵ We are currently in progress writing about the necessity of the Magical structure, the history of art making images (and imaginary) from that period, and the close connection with Nature and Mother Earth—as it seems obvious to us in observing ourselves and others that COVID-19 pandemic and the rather terrifying situations in politics and economics around the world—there is going to be a needed turn rather rapidly for people to make, e.g., those who can no longer go to work like they used to, socialize, be hopeful about future prospects improving—and, the ‘dark’ foreboding layers of a miasma of attempting to take into account all the uncertainties of human existence as a species due to climate change, pending nuclear wars, pandemics, etc. “Powerless,” said Starhawk in a recent rant, is what humans most cannot stand, and they’ll do anything to find “power” and “control” again, even if that means via extreme cultic conspiracy theories and choosing dictators for their leaders.

Our experience in groups, shows that connecting with Nature and Mother Earth has profound implications. We have seen the positive results for many. There is some sense of re-empowerment that comes with taking the alternative (‘greater’) perspective on reality by aligning and resonating with Nature, and ‘greater than human beings.’ The “return” quality of arts practices, with trance, etc. allows us to access as modern people (i.e., born-in in the Rational epoch) the earlier stages and structures, and the Fear Management System-2 (Purple) that has already many attributes of value in re-building a relationship with Fear that is not based on the problems Gebser points out to in especially the Mental Rational. In the Magical the “arational” (*a la* Bickel) and the Integral (Arational of Gebser) may very well co-create an unique and effective intelligence that most humans have not seen before. New forging of a relationship with “magic” itself and with “miracle” itself, respectively, is found in both women leaders Starhawk and Marianne Williamson. The most basic definition of “magic” is the self-conscious directing of one’s energy and attention to make a change in consciousness itself (pers. comm., Barbara Bickel, Oct. 18, 2020)—and, for Williamson (1992), a miracle happens when one takes action with intention and makes an actual shift from Fear to Love. The time seems ripe for both of these movements, and the Magical, within an Integral Aperspectival context is a potent combination. As part of artworking we thus teach Integral theories as well.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Spontaneous Creation Making (Bickel & Fisher, 1993); see also on our website at Studio M* go to <http://studiomatrixial.space>

⁵⁶ I’m using “Integral” theories quite widely at this point, and thus include Bracha L. Ettinger’s matrixial theory (based on the child-mother-womb space and time of the Archaic-

To close this section on Magical, I'll quote extensively from Starhawk's teaching and community website:

As we navigate unprecedented, uncertain times, we need magic! That is, we need the ancient art and science of consciousness change, because as Einstein said, "We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them."

We need magic to help us stay grounded, sane, and able to sleep as the tension mounts—and a little support from some friends would be nice, too! We need magic to counter the manipulative magic that floods the internet and the airwaves every day with toxic energies, to help us discern truth and provide an antidote to the poisons. We need magic not as a substitute for action, but to further our own resilience as we dream the world we want and channel our energies effectively to make it real.⁵⁷

A FEW Concluding Remarks

More studies will reveal just how important Gebser's work is to *finding our way* today in the midst of the confusions within this decline of one epoch in transition (and 'birth pains') to become another epoch that finally has the potentiality to truly *not* be motivated by fear as the primary driver. This is an integral vision (*via* integral theory). But, more than that, and more than Gebser's mapping, this paper shows the importance of bringing together an amalgam of intelligences (e.g., fear management systems) into better communication. For too long, the dominant Rational (worldview) has occluded, rather than transcended and included, the prior consciousness structures and systems of Defense. This paper is thus an optimistic evolutionary sketch of what might happen when Gebser's Integral is enhanced with an Indigenous worldview, a Fearlessness paradigm, a Matrixial theory and generally the re-ignition of the best aspects of the Magical *per se* —*via* artworking.

I have mentioned signs and leaders of these enhancements in a conscious (r)evolution of thought and actions. It is recommended we all study these

Magical) and on Wilber, and Indigenous worldviews and various other "soft technologies" for restoration and transformation—all of which, engage some teachings about fear and fearlessness.

⁵⁷ <https://starhawk.org/event/magical-activism-series-online-with-starhawk/>

cases and exemplars, learn and critique their ways, and re-build our own empowerment and leadership within communities of practitioners who (at least) embrace an Integral Arational, Aperspectival approach to the future.

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