

BEYOND THE EVOLUTIONARY PARADIGM IN CONSCIOUSNESS STUDIES

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ABSTRACT: Adopting an “archetypal” reading of analytical psychology, this paper seeks to explore the often encountered assumption that consciousness is “evolving.” The author considers parallels between the work of C.G. Jung and Jean Gebser, arguing that the ideas of both figures have at times been improperly understood and misappropriated in support of the evolutionary paradigm. It is suggested that the insights of archetypal psychology might help dismantle some of the long-standing assumptions of transpersonal theorizing, thus supporting the emergence of a more participatory outlook. Such an outlook proposes that consciousness is both culturally-embedded, yet self-creatively vitalized. This approach finds further support from the work of Jacques Lacan, Owen Barfield, and Jorge Ferrer.

KEYWORDS: archetypal psychology, consciousness, evolution, participatory, transpersonal theory.

Since its inception, transpersonal theory has fostered the idea that consciousness is evolving. Such a position holds that the “history” of consciousness can be traced in terms that are broadly indicative of advance. So widely held is this assumption that it could easily be mistaken for an established fact. When the notion of “evolution” is applied in the study of consciousness, how are we to interpret this? Integral theorist Allan Combs (2002) suggests that the word can be understood in at least three distinct senses: in *biological* terms, it signifies the process by which life on Earth is thought to have developed and diversified; in a *historical* sense, it is adopted as a way of characterizing any process demonstrating a supposed growth or improvement over time; and in the context of *complexity*, the word is used to suggest the manner in which self-organizing systems appear to develop from simple states to those perceived as hierarchically more complex. These three senses of “evolution” clearly exhibit some measure of overlap, with each definition informing our impressions of the other two. Why has the conceptual precept seemingly embodied in this term exerted such a fascination for the transpersonal study of consciousness, and what are the implications for the extent to which its postulation has gone unchallenged?

To begin to explore these questions, I would like to consider Jung’s notion of the archetypes, which he conceptualized as the innate organizers of thought upon which consciousness is founded. Jung’s approach to the psyche places considerable emphasis on teleology. So strongly emphasized do some consider this aspect of his thinking that many of his most well-known followers have been moved to claim an almost religious significance for his ideas. Perhaps the most striking of these readings is reflected in the approach of Edward Edinger

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(1984), for whom Jung's work is fashioned as nothing less than a new dispensation. Interpretations of this kind have sometimes been challenged, particularly by the archetypal tradition established by James Hillman. Hillman's (1976) notion of "seeing through" (pp. 113–164) calls for a reading of Jung that does service to what he and others perceive as the living kernel of Jung's psychology: a self-reflexively informed and existentially nuanced approach to the life of the imagination. An appreciation for the substance of the archetypal approach can be gleaned from an examination of the role that biological evolution continues to play in the reception of Jung's work, with this appreciation further informing our understanding of the implications of the other valences attendant to the notion of "evolution" in respect to its application in the field of consciousness studies. Prior to pursuing this line of inquiry, however, I would like to contextualize the matter by considering the work of Jean Gebser. Combs and Krippner (1996) consider both Jung and Gebser to be *historical evolutionists*, suggesting that both figures "regarded the development of the modern psyche as a product of time and experience" (p. 68). While ample evidence certainly exists to support this contention, such a view does not adequately encapsulate the full scope of either writer's work. It will be argued in the present context, that both Gebser and Jung actually seem to point to a trans-developmental position that problematizes the notion of development and throws doubt upon the evolutionary paradigm itself.

MISSED CONNECTIONS AND MISSING LINKS

Gebser's theoretical relationship to Jung is an intriguing topic that has yet to be properly explored. The most frequently cited difference between the two men would, on the face of it, appear to be a significant one: Gebser (1984) questions the conceptual legitimacy of an "unconscious" mind, and favors instead an approach founded on different intensities of consciousness (p. 204). This seemingly fundamental critique of Jung may not cut so deep, however, in that Gebser tends to use the term *consciousness* more expansively, adopting this word to intend both a witnessing tendency and a directive force. For Gebser, consciousness is not only identified with the ego, but is treated more broadly as a mediator between the ego and the suprapersonal. Jung, by contrast, uses the term more narrowly to signify the sense of oneself as an independent subject. Thus, this seemingly fundamental difference might rightly be regarded, for the most part, semantic. In fact, considering the lack of interest in Gebser's work demonstrated by Jungian scholarship, the two figures have a great deal more in common than might be supposed.

A strong argument can be made that Gebser's structures of consciousness are implied, though in less worked out form, in the work of Jung. For Gebser, human consciousness is thought to have gone through four distinct noetic styles or "structures," as he calls them: the *archaic* structure gives rise to a form of consciousness that is "zero-dimensional" and minimally differentiated, the *magical* structure conjures a point-like sense of unity that is still embedded in nature, the *mythical* structure translates experience in terms of a world image, and the *mental* structure registers the emergence of conceptual thought proper.

Gebser also identifies a “deficient” mode of the mental structure, which he terms *rational* consciousness. It is at the level of the mental structure that Gebser believes most Westerners presently reside, although he also posits the emergence of a fifth *integral* structure, the nature of which is to integrate all four of the structures preceding it.

Resonating with Gebser’s approach, Jungian scholar Robert Segal (1992) suggests that Jung’s treatment of the psychological history of humankind can be understood in terms of four stages. Segal’s approach is helpful, in that these stages are not clearly formalized in Jung’s work. The *primitive* stage is marked by a state of primal identification, which Jung identifies with Levy-Bruhl’s notion of *participation mystique*. At this stage, the “individual” has yet to experience him or herself as such, living instead in a state of immediate identification with the wider world. Under these circumstances, it is not yet possible to discern between the external environment and the content of the unconscious. This is followed by the emergence of the *ancient* stage, which is related to the rise of civilization, witnessing the nascent signs of ego consciousness and a partial withdrawal from the previous state of identification. The gods are now perceived to exist as separate entities. Relations between the unconscious and the emergent sense of a separate self are congenial since, like the primitive, the ancient continues to regulate unconscious dynamisms by means of religion. Only in recent times, with the development of the *modern* stage, does the ego become dangerously independent, tending to dismiss the role of the unconscious altogether. At this stage the individual identifies only with the ego, and lives in a world that has been “demythified.” While the primitive and ancient both manage the unconscious by means of ritual, in the absence of a living religion the modern’s projections are erratic and largely unregulated. The fourth and final stage identified by Segal as occurring in Jung’s work is that of the *contemporary*. In contrast to the modern, the contemporary lives in recognition of the great loss associated with the disenchantment of the world. Without falling back into the ancient’s state of identification, the contemporary nevertheless mourns the absence of a connection to the irrational basis of life, and strives to find new ways of consciously connecting with this ground. According to Segal, the emergence of the contemporary stage is only discernible in a small portion of the population, with most individuals at the present time still tending to fall into the modern or ancient designations.

The four stages identified by Segal demonstrate obvious parallels with Gebser’s *magical*, *mythical*, *mental*, and *integral* structures. While these structures were only implied by Jung, Gebser is much more explicit in theorizing the structures themselves. He also examines the apparent transition between these structures, suggesting that the movement thus suggested is not gradual, but registered in terms of a sudden qualitative shift in consciousness. The emergence of a new structure heralds a radically new style of consciousness that comes to overlay and largely obscure those structures preceding it; the integral structure constitutes an exception, since its essential nature lies in the integration of all the structures coming before it. Somewhat reminiscent of Prigogine’s approach to dissipative systems, Gebser conceives of the transition from one structure to

the next as a radical and discontinuous break from the previous state of order. What makes Gebser's work so problematic and yet so fascinating is his attempt to speak in conceptual terms (and hence from the mental structure) of modes of consciousness that are both pre- and trans-conceptual. His reflexive engagement with this problem leads to a self-canceling reserve, as he strives to resist falling into the deficient "rational" mode of consciousness, and to do service to the emergence of the integral. Since the mental structure is reflected in perspectival/linear thinking, Gebser is loathe to take the historical record too seriously, and is particularly averse to speak of a "progression" or "evolution" of consciousness. This aversion seems to contradict the entire thrust of his project, yet it appears necessary if his theory is not to defeat itself by way of a less conscious contradiction: either Gebser willingly recognizes the limits of his own method and seeks to take self-contradictory measures to enact this knowingly, or in the very act of theorizing he falls head first into the problem his own theory is so much concerned with explicating. By "sacrificing" itself, Gebser's work seems to enact its own egoic defeat in cause of the emergence of something that lies just beyond its grasp, rather than capitulate to rationalistic hubris and become internally inconsistent as a consequence of its own lack of self-reflexivity.

The most well known scholar of Gebser's work in the English speaking world, Georg Feuerstein (1987), is impatient with Gebser's reserve. He writes: "I am aware that trying to date and trace the inner development of humanity's beginnings is like walking on brittle ice. Yet I do feel that Gebser's reticence about this is a limitation rather than a virtue" (p. 9). Elsewhere he describes Gebser's efforts to transcend the limits of mentalistic language as "like riding a train off its rails" (p. 43). In his attempt to nail Gebser's structures to the supposed historical facts, Feuerstein goes so far as to claim that had Gebser shown more concern for chronology, "he would have had to acknowledge that there is a far greater continuity of consciousness mutations than his four-structure model permits" (p. 44). This claim goes to show how far Gebser's major English language explainer has diverged from Gebser's work. To question whether the structures really emerge through mutation is to throw out an absolutely fundamental aspect of Gebser's thinking. Adopting such a position is of course legitimate, but in the context of outlining Gebser's theories (Feuerstein defines his approach as both an introduction and a critique), there is a clear danger that Gebser's original vision might come to be obscured. Ken Wilber's ideas have been served well by Feuerstein's reframing of Gebser, since he shares with Feuerstein both a similar attraction to historical dating and a possible lack of concern for the limits of "plain spoken" discourse. Feuerstein's revisionist approach to Gebser has facilitated Wilber in integrating Gebser's thought into his own system.

In a similar attempt to bring Gebser's work back into the evolutionary fold, Combs (2002) distinguishes between *constructive* and *emergent* models of evolution. While thinkers such as Hegel, Aurobindo, Bergson, de Chardin, and Wilber, adopt evolutionary models that rely on the idea of gradual change, according to Combs, Gebser's notion of mutation implies a "radical bifurcation of structure" (p. 232) and hence is posited as an emergent model.

While this distinction is helpful and (unlike Feuerstein) attempts to do service to Gebser's discontinuous approach, the presentation of the two models as "evolutionary" clearly privileges the constructive mode of understanding since the notion of evolution already implies the question of gradual change. It is precisely for this reason that Gebser himself is averse to using the word. Gebser's (1984) adoption of the term *mutation* is of fundamental significance, and can in no way be understood as synonymous with evolution: "With the unfolding of each new consciousness mutation, consciousness increases in intensity; but the concept of evolution, with its continuous development, excludes the discontinuous character of mutation" (p. 41). The observation that evolution understood in terms of emergence and complexity does indeed resonate in certain respects with Gebser's approach, effectively acts so as to obfuscate the radical significance of mutation. While Gebser is at pains to recognize that even the notion of mutation is inadequate in so far as it purports to be the product of the very thing it seeks to give a name to, "emergent evolution" as a scientific principle does not hold itself accountable to the same standards. In the scientific context where material reality is assumed to be primary, emergence is posited as a timeless and unconditional statement of fact about the nature of a supposedly objective reality, and not as a function of participatory consciousness. Since the discourse of science is based on a completely different set of foundational assumptions, the radical shift imposed upon our thinking by positing consciousness as the primary field of study precludes a casual adoption of scientific standards in support of a rendering on behalf of *common sense*. R.D. Laing defines psychology as "the structure of the evidence" (1967, p. 18). Likewise, Jung never tired of asserting the primacy of the psyche: "There is no medium for psychology to reflect itself in: it can only portray itself in itself" (1947, para. 421). How then are we to account for the extent to which widely respected Jungians (Knox, 2003; Stevens, 1982) have been able to argue that Jungian thinking is compatible with, and in fact necessarily culminates in, an evolutionary approach to the psyche? Confining this question to its theoretical dimensions, the answer appears to lie with the explication of Jung's theory of archetypes.

ARCHETYPES, INSTINCTS, AND DEVELOPMENTAL FANTASY

The archetypes are conceived by Jung as the foundation of consciousness (1959, para. 656) and the "unconscious organizers of our ideas" (1950, para. 278). Archetypes are also "locally, temporally, and individually conditioned" (1954, para. 476). They are conceptualized as representations of the instincts, and yet these representations are not themselves directly representable: the archetype itself is unknowable and posited (only by implication) as a dynamism, the nature of which arises in consciousness by way of archetypal images and ideas. Jung uses the spectrum of light as a metaphor, with the infrared end of the spectrum assigned to the instincts, and the ultraviolet range associated with the archetypes (1947, para. 414). The evolutionary approach to Jung's work claims that since the instincts are a product of evolution, so too are the archetypes:

The basis of ethology is the recognition that an instinct must be understood in terms of a species' *environment of evolutionary adaptedness*, that is, the environment in which it has evolved and to which that instinct has served to adapt the species. This is the context in which we may explain the *purpose* of an instinct (that is, its adaptive function). [...] Therefore, to understand the purpose (adaptive function) of the archetypes (as the psychical correlate of the instincts), we must consider *Homo sapiens'* environment of evolutionary adaptedness. (MacLennan, 2006, p. 11–12)

This seemingly quite reasonable position is, upon closer inspection, fundamentally backwards. How can we talk about the archetypes having a “purpose” and suppose that we have gotten to the bottom of things, when any notion of purpose is itself by definition an archetypal construct? While from an evolutionary perspective the archetypes are indeed the precipitate of the instincts, this holds true only from within the confines of this archetypal meaning construct. With reference to Jung's assertions that the archetypes were formed out of lived experience, Rensma (2013) has convincingly demonstrated that Jung's work often flirts with Lamarckian ideas, and that the efforts of biologically-inclined Jungians to “defend” Jung against the suggestion that his psychology does not fit neatly into a strictly Darwinian paradigm are unconvincing. In fact, the Lamarckian strain sometimes detectable in Jung's work is by no means the most challenging aspect of his approach to the matter—his archetypal theory in fact threatens to burst the confines of the evolutionary paradigm altogether. Recognition of this tendency, however, requires an attentive attitude to the logic of Jung's argument, and a willingness to follow this logic to its conclusion. The archetypes are representations of the instincts, yet these representations are not themselves directly representable. So what *are* the instincts? Since they can only be brought to consciousness by way of the archetypes, we cannot say. Thus, while the instinctual might be assumed primary by a biologist, from the point of view of the psyche, even speaking of the instinctual requires that we have an idea of it, and to have a meaningful idea of it, consciousness is already being constellated around archetypal influences. The instincts are therefore at a double remove from consciousness; we infer their existence only with recourse to the representations (archetypal images) of their representations (the archetypes *per se*). In Gebser's language, this points to the extent to which the mythical structure subtends the mental.

In distinct contrast to transpersonal theorizing, analytical psychology has been upheld for the most part in clinical rather than academic environs. The trajectory of Jungian thinking has for this reason been made subject to a possibly counter-productive demand for “scientific” respectability. Additionally, Jung's own desire to identify himself as a scientist alongside his reticence to engage with the metaphysical implications of his work has left his psychology vulnerable to scientific reductionism. The misrepresentation that Jung's ideas have sometimes endured as a consequence is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the recent trend towards “supporting” his findings with recourse to the assumptions of evolutionary biology. While this tendency has reached a new apotheosis in the fetishizing of neuroscience, the groundwork was perhaps established with the genetic approach of Erich Neumann. As is

well known, Neumann's (1954) major work, *The Origin and History of Consciousness*, purports to outline the evolution of consciousness as expressed through a proposed historical development of mythology. Giegerich (1975) mounts a strong critique of Neumann's project, arguing that Neumann's "history" suffers from a chronic lack of historically dateable material, and that a study of mythology refutes the proposed chronology. More fundamentally, however, Giegerich reminds us that the evolutionary perspective rests upon a form of religious fascination that marks this perspective as archetypal (p. 27), hence attempting to explain the entire archetypal field from this singular vantage is inherently problematic. Recognition of this perspective has often been found wanting, perhaps because the question is readily conflated with matters arising around "individuation," and the ill-founded yet often encountered notion that this process is somehow inherent to the unconscious. The sense of a "process" is engendered by the meaning-making function of conscious experience. This is apparent where Jung writes: "If one believes that the unconscious always knows best, one can easily be betrayed into leaving the dreams to take the necessary decisions, and is then disappointed when the dreams become more and more trivial and meaningless. [...] The unconscious mind functions satisfactorily only when the conscious mind fulfills its tasks to the very limit" (1945, para. 568). In Giegerich's view, Neumann's theory can be understood as a myth about myth: "What makes the book a mythos is the archetypal fantasy of genetic development itself, the idea of phylogeny and of the progressive differentiation from the uroboric One to the radiant sun-hero" (Giegerich, 1975, p. 26). Giegerich's critique has interesting implications for the revisionist approach to the work of Jean Gebser demonstrated by Feuerstein. Feuerstein (1987, p. 53) endorses Neumann's view that ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny, calling upon figures like Freud, Erikson, Piaget, and Kohlberg, to try and support the claim that there are innate stages to development. He fails to mention that all four of these theorists have been widely criticized for the subjectively bound nature of their supposedly universal claims (Gilligan, 1982). Feuerstein shares this approach with Wilber (1981), who likewise attempts to associate Gebser's structures with the proposed developmental schemas of a host of theorists. This universalist attempt to assimilate Gebser is only conceivable with a disregard both for the substance of his work, and for the number of culturally bound assumptions that need to be made in order to carry this project through.

Remaining faithful to the direct experience of the psyche, with a careful reading of Jung we can no longer trick ourselves into assuming that the instincts have priority. While this conclusion might surprise those who would seek to position Jung as a pioneer in evolutionary psychology, it is nonetheless in keeping with his claim that physical reality is merely a postulate, and materialism, a hypostasis of matter (1939, para. 762 & 765). This dimension of Jung's thinking also resonates to a considerable degree with Lacan's work, who is likewise concerned to preserve a distinction between "the body" *per se* and the symbolic order. Lacan suggests that the body is infiltrated by the symbolic realm having been written over with signifiers in the acquisition of language. While it may seem counter-intuitive to claim that our experience of the body is not primary, this is what is implied by Freud's (1915) notion of primal repression: "a first

phase of repression, which consists in the psychically [ideational] representative of the instinct being denied entrance into the conscious” (p. 148). Developing Freud’s thinking, Lacan suggests that the reality of the body is something that comes to be obscured as we enter language. This establishes a dynamic in his theorizing reminiscent of Jung, in that Lacan’s postulating of the “real” as an inexpressible order lying *beyond* language is itself registered *by way of language*, and hence is subject to the same problematizing we have seen with respect to Jung’s approach to the instincts and their inference by way of the archetype. In both cases, any pursuit of a final “truth” lying beyond the meanings we construe, leads to a uroboric swallowing of the tail. A consciousness of this pursuit lies at the heart of a participatory ontology. For Jung, the transpersonal dimension of experience is registered in active participation with the process of meaning-making, or “dreaming the myth forward” (1951, p. 160), which for Lacan is registered by a shift in the individual’s relationship to the wider symbolic order. In a fashion reminiscent of both Gebser and Hillman, Lacan (1997) also emphasizes an approach to the psyche that postulates a-temporal structures rather than stages of linear development. His notion of retroaction (an expansion of Freud’s “deferred action”) suggests that the past is only meaningfully constituted in the present, leading him to state quite unequivocally: “beware of that register of thought known as evolutionism” (para. 213).

The challenging and unstable nature of these ideas has sometimes been interpreted as a threat to transpersonal theorizing. Wilber’s (2000) often-aggressive diatribes against post-structuralism and what he has termed “the rancid leveling of all qualitative distinctions” (p. 160) is emblematic of this. Wilber (2000) writes: “The extreme postmodernists do not just stress the importance of interpretation, they claim reality is *nothing but an interpretation*” (p. 163). As Wilber does not cite these extremists or indicate who specifically might fall into this camp, it is difficult to examine the substance of this claim or what exactly might be intended by it. The notion that reality is founded in interpretation need not imply that there is no such thing as an objective situation, but simply that the objective situation is participatory and hence subject to change. This, of course, does not bode well for any transpersonal theory that would seek to objectively outline the sequence of human development from the archaic past to the distant future. Combs (2002) writes:

Just how flexible, however, can reality be? Is it just putty to be molded into any shape whatsoever? Few would argue for this position, though certain postmodern constructionist thinkers seem to flirt with it. A more likely position is that reality is only incompletely defined in terms readily understood by nervous systems. In this case the principal occupation of science and philosophy is to sharpen up its corners for us, grinding the right set of lenses through which to see it truly. (Combs, 2002, p. 55)

For Jung and Lacan however, it is imperative that we recognize how the nervous system is already implicated in the meaning-making process. There is no question of finally separating the supposed data of the senses from our interpretation of it. This notion finds support in the work of Owen Barfield

(1988), who argues: “if the particles, or the unrepresented, are in fact all that is *independently* there, then the world we all accept as real is in fact a system of collective representations” (p. 20). Reflecting on the nature of the historical enterprise, Barfield notices that received opinion proceeds on the assumption that in the past: “the unrepresented was behaving in such a way that, *if* human beings with the collective representations characteristic of the last few centuries of western civilization had been there, the things described would also have been there” (p. 37). From a participatory perspective, such an assumption appears wholly unfounded. Considered in terms of the individual, there seem to be interesting implications for the mainstream assumption that therapeutic practice is concerned merely with transforming the experiential past in distinction from the historical actuality. In keeping with Barfield, “history” has no meaning outside our shared experience of it, hence a change in the experiential dimension figures a change in the historical actuality—the past exists only as a function of the present¹. This is suggestive of the systems effect that a shift in individual consciousness can have upon others who share a living-past with that person. The creative dynamism of the psyche tends to be regarded only in terms of the future, yet the subject of creation is just as much the past. This past, in so far as it is configured in the unconscious constellation of meaning by way of the archetypes, is changed in an actual sense, an approach that was foreshadowed with Freud’s shift from uncovering the “truth” of a seduction, to an emphasis on the underlying myth. Ferenczi and Rank (1923) suggest that while the major task of psychoanalysis is ostensibly the uncovering of the unconscious, the material that is most truly repressed “since it was never ‘experienced’ can never be ‘remembered,’ one must let it be produced on the ground of certain indications” (p. 31). Freud actually makes a distinction between repression proper (the process by which that which was once conscious is forced into unconsciousness) and *Verleugnung*, or “disavowal” as it is translated in English, a term used to signify the subject’s refusal to consciously register a traumatic experience. This distinction was subsequently amplified by Lacan to explore how the unsymbolized past remains trapped outside history (Davoine, & Gaudilliere, 2004). The reality of trauma persists in its remaining unmoved by time; its facticity is in some sense jeopardized precisely when the traumatic reality of the unspeakable is rendered into words, for at this moment the event which was not yet registered as such can be made subject to the possibility of being treated metaphorically and hence metabolized by history.

WHERE NOW?

The most we can do is to *dream the myth onwards* and give it a modern dress. And whatever explanation or interpretation does to it, we do to our own souls as well [...] the “explanation” should always be such that the functional significance of the archetype remains unimpaired. (Jung, 1951, para. 271)

Over the course of his synthetic approach to the evolution of consciousness, Kelly (2010) explores some of the archetypal constellations manifesting in

various perspectives on evolution. But what of the fundamental organizing principle implied by the notion of evolution itself? In an article responding to Tarnas' *Cosmos and Psyche*, Kelly (2011) posits the archetypal and historical realms as distinct and complementary (p. 78). Apparently regarding the notion of "evolution" as somehow existing altogether beyond the preserve of the archetypal, he goes so far as to state that: "the archetypal-astrological perspective is most coherent and compelling when explicitly engaged with *the larger and more determinate context of the evolution of consciousness* [italics my own]" (p. 80). This position seems to reflect an underestimation of the claim that archetypal theory makes over historical process. That Kelly takes this stance is surprising, since in an earlier article he clearly recognizes the extent to which operational thinking is subtended by the analogical imagination (2002, p. 72). As though in direct response to the position Kelly adopts in assuming that the historical domain can be separated from the archetypal, Barfield (1988) states: "For non-participating consciousness it is either, or. A narrative is *either* a historical record, *or* a symbolical representation" (p. 151). Ironically, Barfield himself is perhaps guilty of the same mistake in respect of demonstrating a reificatory attitude towards evolution. In the course of outlining his approach, he makes a distinction between three different varieties of evolution: "(a) an imputed evolution of some wholly 'objective', and therefore wholly unrepresentable base, (b) a fancied evolution of idols, and (c) the actual evolution of phenomena (including, as that does, a correlative evolution of consciousness)" (p. 71). Thus, while offering one of the most compelling cases in favor of a participatory perspective, Barfield continues to endorse the notion of an "evolution of consciousness," not seeming to account for the fact that the very notion of evolution is itself a representation. Barfield is able to speak of Darwinian evolution as an "evolution of idols" (p. 66), yet does not seem to acknowledge that the "evolution of consciousness" is susceptible to the same criticism. In having failed to subject "evolution" to an act of imagination that would consciously register this idol as a figuration, it appears questionable whether Barfield remains true to his own cause.

Jung (1954) states: "The forms we use for assigning meaning are historical categories that reach back into the mists of time—a fact we do not take sufficiently into account. Interpretations make use of certain linguistic matrices that are themselves derived from primordial images" (para. 67). In the following paragraph Jung points to how the word "idea" is historically determined, and hence, in a fashion reminiscent of Gebser, seems to allude to how his own theory of archetypes is in danger of consuming itself. In so far as archetypal theory exerts its own fascination and embodies its own kind of meaning making, it too is archetypal. Just as the birth of the universe and the birth of the individual are essentially veiled, so too the nature of the archetype. This is a recapitulation of the essential problem of consciousness. To explicate the origin of archetypes requires that we rely on archetypes. How then can the whole domain of the archetypal be thought adequately explained in the terms of evolution? Jung's approach to the archetype certainly does not require that we give up the notion of evolution altogether, but it does remind us that this particular means of structuring meaning is by no means final. That which Jung says in respect of the God image is just as much applicable to evolution—it is

unquestionably a psychic fact, but beyond that we cannot say. Furthermore, it is a psychic fact of seemingly pressing value for the present age. Clearly evolutionary thinking cannot simply be sidestepped, since the very act of attempting to do so is liable to rest upon an evolutionary supposition. By considering the evolutionary paradigm as in some respect inadequate, we seem to imply that we have evolved beyond it. Nonetheless, it appears that the study of consciousness is in danger of putting the cart before the horse when it takes “evolution” as a factual given and loses sight of the always self-reflexive nature of the discipline. This means respecting the likes of Gebser and Jung for the nuanced subtlety with which they approach these questions, rather than attempting to correct these figures by means of historicist revisionism in the case of the former, or a biological reductionism in terms of the latter. Barfield (1988) suggests that what is “needed” is not a new idea, but a new way of looking at the ideas we already possess (p. 11). He writes: “The best way of escape from deep-rooted error has often proved to be, to pursue it to its logical conclusion, that is, to go on taking it seriously and see what follows. Only we must be consistent. We must take it *really* seriously” (p. 57). The evolutionary paradigm is too fundamental to our present consciousness for there to be any question of our simply discarding it. Lachman (2003) suggests that for the esoteric study of consciousness, a teleological-evolutionary assumption constitutes the “paramount idea” (p. xxviii) for the field’s development. We might tend to this idea in the manner Barfield (1988) suggests by applying greater attention to the fundamental distinction between a metaphysics *of* process and a metaphysics *in* process.

If we are to do service to the “participatory turn” championed by Ferrer (2002, 2011), it seems necessary that we at least relinquish the evolutionary paradigm as a *prima facie* given. Ferrer argues against Wilber’s notion of a predetermined evolutionary path, and suggests that “teleological thinking does not require a monolithic final causality” (p. 155). This rejection of a finalized goal certainly seems to be an “advance” for transpersonal theorizing. Hillman (2010), in attempting to de-literalize the notion of a final purpose, quotes Jung as follows: “The goal is important only as an idea; the essential thing is the opus which leads to the goal: *that* is the goal of a lifetime” (Jung, 1946, para. 400). With this said, might it not be conceivable that the concept of a goal Jung speaks of, even if the content remains undetermined, still remains to be overcome? The indeterminate goal as an abstract ideal is always in danger of being concretely determined as the very goal of upholding this ideal, or perhaps even as the goal of transcending all goals altogether². It is precisely as we attempt to conceptualize a progression beyond progress that we encounter the limits of our ability to free ourselves from the fundamental assumption that consciousness is evolving.

NOTES

¹ In its “actuality,” the past can never be contained by history. The historical record, which speaks to the collective conception of possible pasts as we experience them in the present, is of course not identical with the past itself. History gives form to the past, even as the actuality of that past is naturally transhistorical.

²Ferrer is careful to state that his position in respect to the indeterminacy of the Mystery should not be confused with what he posits clearly as a plurality of determinate spiritual paths, each of which might function as a means of enacting that Mystery.

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