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EVOLUTION OF WOMEN'S CONSCIOUSNESS

Evolution of Women's Consciousness: Toward Integral Consciousness

Katherine T. Ziemke

Abstract

This article presents research materials which demonstrate historical consciousness for women of ancient European descent, the cultural heritage of the author. Awareness is examined from various historical angles in a transdisciplinary approach to the work. I explore the possibility that women's historical and continued oppression may be a sign of the disintegration of the *mental* and a re-emergence of the *integral structure* of consciousness. A broad examination of women's historical roles and corresponding thought shows how ancient consciousness may be used to accelerate a path toward *integral* consciousness today. Finally, this essay proposes that women's historical consciousness and primordial memories of gender neutral societies may be unseen factors—gifts yet to be unveiled—that women may contribute toward hastening the assimilation of *integral* consciousness.

Keywords: women, consciousness, evolution, historic, awareness, magical structure, mythical structure, integral structure, primordial memories, unconscious, gender-neutral societies

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Introduction

Through an evaluation of women's history, as framed by the cultural consciousness of the era, this essay introduces proof of Jean Gebser's claim that the *mental structure* of consciousness is disintegrating. I propose that women of ancient European descent, my own cultural heritage, maintained threads of the *magic* and *mythical structures* of consciousness through the ages and suggest that historical and primordial memories may be accessed via active imagination and the unconscious mind. Through an historical lens, this work promotes multidimensional awareness, which if recognized and embraced may assist in the emergence of *integral* consciousness.

Utilizing Jean Gebser's transdisciplinary historical cultural consciousness structures as a theoretical framework, this study identifies common observable threads in women's consciousness by analyzing historical events and women's responses. Consciousness structures will be considered from Paleolithic times until present. Women's history is broadly examined from the Neolithic period up until the late medieval period. Gerda Lerner's work is used as foundational material in support of Lerner's claim that women's knowledge of women's history changes the female perception of herself.

In the first section below, *Consciousness and Awareness*, I introduce Gebser's evolutionary structures of consciousness. The concepts of *participatory consciousness* and *conscious connection* are presented as important attributes preserved by women through the ages, remnants of the *mythic* and *magic structures* of consciousness, respectively. Awareness is introduced and

discussed as a crucial component of *integral* consciousness.

The discussion of awareness is continued and connected with the historical causes of women's oppression in the next section, *Historical Awareness and Signs of Changing Consciousness*. I introduce Gebser's proposal that the *mental structure* of consciousness appears to be crumbling, slowly yielding to the *integral structure*, and posit that women's historical oppression, mistreatment, and modern awareness may signal such changes in cultural consciousness.

In the section *Connection to Magic and Mythical Consciousness*, I offer positive counter examples to historical oppression, showing the many ways in which women-in-history succeeded in spite of oppression and mistreatment. This section discusses women's ways of being, which historically preserved the *magic* and *mythical structures* of consciousness across time. The *magic* and *mythical structures* are no longer abundantly present in modern society yet, they are crucial components of *integral* consciousness.

I introduce materials from the point of view of pre-history in the section *Consciousness Bridge to the Ancient Past*, supporting the claims that our world once worshipped women gods and that ancient peoples lived in gender-neutral and matrilineal societies, with some evidence of ancient matriarchal societies. The concepts of morphic resonance and primordial memories from the unconscious are presented to connect memories of ancient gender-neutral societies to modern times. Memories of pre-historic gender-neutral societies serve alongside historical awareness as yet another element toward achieving *integral* consciousness.

Consciousness and Awareness

This study provides an ontological exploration of the historical structures of consciousness according to the foundational work of cultural philosopher Jean Gebser and other scholars whose work complements Gebser's. This particular philosophy of cultural consciousness was selected as a framework for the study mainly for the manner in which Gebser describes the common thought of the historical periods, allowing direct comparisons of consciousness to be made to women's history. After introducing Gebser's cultural consciousness eras, I discuss awareness as a vital component of *integral* consciousness, and argue that an awareness of history acts as a conduit to *integral* consciousness.

There are five major structures of consciousness that arose historically in sequence, sometimes overlapping. They provide descriptions for the way people experience the external world and create meaning from it. The structures of consciousness are *archaic*, *magic*, *mythic*, *mental*, and *integral* consciousness (Gebser, 1949/1985, see also Combs, 2002, 2009; Feuerstein, 1987; Johnson, 2019; Thompson, 1998; Wilber, 1996, 2001). Each new structure of consciousness transitions "the human to a new level of knowledge and competence" (Combs, 2002, p. 80). Advancing a structure takes us a step closer to the "root of consciousness, which Gebser terms the *origin*, a source that will be regained only at the final stage of development" (Combs, 2002, p. 80). As humanity advances in consciousness, note that there remain remnants of prior structures in the psyche, perhaps residing predominantly in the unconscious mind. Below is a brief overview of the structures most pertinent to this discussion.

A main feature of thought during the *magical structure* of consciousness, which occurred in roughly the Paleolithic period, is a distinct lack of individuality. During this period, one's identity is derived as a function of his or her connection to the group, other beings, and nature (Combs, 2002). The *magical structure* represents an attribute of *conscious connection*, a concept I attribute to women's historical cognizance during this period. The phrase *conscious connection* has been used in one form or another by many authors to describe an "interconnectedness," an intertwined consciousness in which one deeply identifies with other beings and the natural world (Wilber, 1996/1981, p. 49). Erich Neumann (1955/2015) describes the conscious interrelationship of humans to the outside world during this era as having "*participation mystique*" (p. 262). He adds, "[S]tone, plant and man, animal and star, were bound together in a single stream, [in the belief that] one could always transform itself into another" (Neumann, 1955/2015, p. 262). The idea of women preserving a *conscious connection* such as this across the ages is expanded more in the section *Connection to Magic and Mythical Consciousness*, below.

As the magic structure faded, the *mythic* structure of consciousness, took its place in the forefront of consciousness. The *mythic structure* is driven by the imagination, which requires active participation (Combs, 2002; Gebser, 1949/1985). This consciousness structure occurred during the Neolithic period (Feuerstein, 1987), a time of inward reflection, self-discovery (Gebser, 1949/1985; Feuerstein, 1987), and creativity, when humans discovered the "meaning of [the] soul" (Combs, 2002, p. 96). The *mythic structure* represents *participatory consciousness*, a phrase which I use to describe a point of intentional and

internalized focus, a connection to the soul that often seems lost today, but which remains buried in the unconscious as an attribute of women's historical consciousness. I borrow this phrase, *participatory consciousness*, which has been introduced by many authors, Barfield (1965/1988), Hegel (1807/1977), Steiner (1994a, 1994b, 2006a, 2006b, 2008), and others but has not been applied specifically to women's historical consciousness. This idea of women preserving a *participatory consciousness* as a remnant of history is developed in the section *Connection to Magic and Mythical Consciousness*, below.

The *mental structure* arrived next in the timeline and is the current dominant manner of thinking where the “ego first became fully established” (Combs, 2002, p. 97). During this time period, which began in roughly 500 B.C.E. and continues today, the five senses became the standard bearer for logic and reason, with science governing the manner of properly defining things by reducing everything to the smallest observable parcel. The *mental structure* is defined by its “rigidity,” self-centeredness, and a “sense of isolation,” all of which appear to be progressing to more extreme levels as time passes (Combs, 2002, p. 99). With the onset of the *mental structure* the culture shifted from matriarchal civilizations to the patriarchy, which came with “war, brutality, slavery, massive tribal migrations,” and many other social instabilities (Feuerstein, 1987, pp. 95- 96).

Within the next phase of development, which we have not yet reached as a culture, the *integral structure* of consciousness arises. *Integral* consciousness occurs when one is in “harmonious integration of all the structures of consciousness,” hence the reason to evaluate and understand the historical evolution and meaning of all the

historical structures (Combs, 2009, pp. 135, 138). When the *integral structure* becomes the cultural norm, we will possess *aperspectival* aspects, that is, a world view where the inner worlds of the *magic* and *mythic structures* and outer world of the *mental structure* unite as one. Living in *integral* consciousness is to live in complete presence—at one with the past, present, and future in a manner “which encompasses origin as an ineradicable present” (Gebser, 1949/1985, p. 294). All “that we *are*, all that we *have been*, and all that we *could be* is radically with us” (Johnson, 2019, p.2, italics in original). Living in the *integral structure* is to live in a manner in which truth is evident merely because of its transparent nature (Gebser, 1949/1985). While there is tangible clarity, there is also a fluidity and a “spiritual depth to *integral* consciousness” (Combs, 2002, p. 101, italics in original). Perhaps the most persuasive reason for studying and seeking to achieve this structure is that *integral* consciousness has “the potential to transform the fabric of human civilization” (Combs, 2002, p. 78).

To attain *integral* consciousness at the most fundamental level, humans must become aware of it and embody enough presence of mind to assimilate it. “[M]an today is not yet conscious of the powers pressing toward realization” (Gebser, 1949/1985, p. 308). Ken Wilber (2001) adds that awareness is the same as an “*ever-present* consciousness” (p. 295, italics in original). It is awareness of thought—the ability to recognize thinking as something we control—which allows us to choose our thoughts. Wilber (2001) calls this “*witnessing awareness*,” and suggests it is a letting-go, a surrender, to a spiritual connection (p. 296, italics in original).

From a scientific viewpoint of awareness, psychiatrist, Daniel J. Siegel (2020) asserts, “Having awareness gives us the choice to

make a change....to access a plane of possibility and enable other options to arise, now freed from the constraints of engrained plateaus” (p. 353). What of the culturally modified brain? There are a number of researchers who suggest that the neural pathways of our brains create mental patterns which in the case of women create a gendered manner of thinking (Barrett, 2017; Doidge, 2007; Eisler & Fry, 2019; Fine, 2010, 2017; Rippon, 2020). Combining awareness and training can result in permanent changes to neural pathways via brain plasticity (Doidge, 2007). Although culture can impact our minds through genetic brain modifications, “creating variations in the gene pool,” new neural pathways and patterns of thinking may be recreated using the concept of neuroplasticity (Doidge, 2007, p. 294). What this means is that knowledge of the past – an awareness of history and the evolution of consciousness – can be used to promote new thought patterns, which may provide a conduit to and component of *integral* consciousness.

Historical Awareness and Signs of Changing Consciousness

One of the first historians to look at and create awareness around women's absence from history books was Gerda Lerner, whose bifurcated theoretical and qualitative transdisciplinary work was foundational to this essay. Lerner holds that having an awareness of history is a crucial element in women's consciousness: “[It] is the relationship of women to history which explains the nature of the female subordination, the causes for women's cooperation in the process of their subordination, the conditions for the oppositions to it, [and] the rise of feminist consciousness” (Lerner, 1986, p. vii). Lerner argues that women's estrangement from

history and themselves must be understood, so that women may become central to their own arguments. To shift consciousness from a patriarchal construct, women must become aware of their historical evolution of thought, perception, and subsequent mental conditioning (Lerner, 1979, 1986, 1993; French, 2008a, 2008b).

Based on the evidence of women's historical oppression discussed below, I suggest that women's oppression and mistreatment was and is an unnoticed signal of the disintegration of the *mental structure* and the emergence of the *integral structure* of consciousness. Gebser, (1949/1985) aptly noted women's oppression stating, “The woman of this age, to the extent that she has any status at all, is seen only as a woman and not as a human being” (p. 150). He seems to be asserting that women collectively live an objectified existence.

Gebser (1949/1985) predicted the collapse of the *mental structure* and the emergence of the *integral structure* of consciousness, and he separately criticized the oppression of women. However, he did not specifically connect these two issues. I suggest that women's oppression is a signal of the disintegration of the *mental structure* and emergence of the *integral structure* of consciousness.

A brief overview of the causes of women's historical oppression follows. These notes show a *hind sight* view of the trajectory of the devaluation of women.

Shift from Nomadic to Agriculture to City-States: Gerda Lerner (1986) asserts that nomadic tribes morphed into farming settlements during the Bronze Age in roughly 1025-1020 B.C.E. This transition brought about the “exchange of women” as a resources, appropriating reproduction in

the same way one might purchase land or a house (Lerner, 1986, p. 212). Villages grew to city-states and ruling monarchies came into vogue. The microcosm of the kingdom was the family, with “patriarchal heads of households able to do with their wives...and children as they willed” (Taylor, 2017, p. 77). So began the gradual down-hill slide of women's sovereignty.

Women's Sexuality: In ancient times, it was initially unknown that egg fertilization was the reason for a birth. When the cause was discovered, women quickly learned to refuse intercourse, taking control over their hormones, which led to a tipping point in favor of violence against women and gender bias (Shlain, 2003). Procreating to produce family members who would ultimately be farm help became an important job and secured loyal wives who would not leave their children. “[Sexuality was] the primary sphere of male power” (MacKinnon, 1982, p. 529), associated with male ambition to master and to rule, increasingly with violence (Eisler, 1996).

Educational Disadvantage: One reason gender bias prevailed for such a lengthy time is that women comprehensively lacked education compared to men of their same class or even the same family. (Lerner, 1993). Girls were excluded almost from the inception of writing, beginning in 2000 B.C.E., with the American colonies only catching onto the phenomena in the eighteenth century (Lerner, 1993). Since most women could not read, write, or conduct business, all transactions of every variety were left in the hands of fathers, brothers or spouses. Helpless, women were forced to live a form of double consciousness, essentially agreeing to men's desires and rules so as to remain clothed and fed (Black, 2007).

Christianity and Religious Rules: A leading scholar on Christian religious texts describes a cover-up of monumental proportions, one which if widely acknowledged could change people's view of religion (Pagels, 1979). The Nag Hammadi texts, rediscovered in 1945, were some of the early Christian manuscripts, thought to be destroyed by church authorities in an attempt to control religious doctrine. This suggests that Christianity, and subsequently law, may not have followed the patriarchal path if the religious teachings were known to be different. Mainstream Christianity might have had a more equitable minded stance toward women had the manuscripts been discovered in Biblical times.

Capital Accumulation–Shift in Values: One attributable reason for the move away from the relatively peaceable gender-neutral societies of pre-3100 B.C.E. is a shift in desire for capital accumulation and subsequent class struggles (Lerner, 1986). Neolithic peoples gradually began to collect more objects or *things*, increasingly valuing the power of possessions over kinship (Lerner, 1986). The transition from inanimate objects and animals as possessions, to women as possessions, which roughly coinciding with the onset of metallurgy for use in weaponry, produced a “dominator model” between men and women (Eisler, 1988, pp. 47-48). This shift in values, objectifying women as commodities, typifies the rigid and ego-centric *mental structure* of consciousness we live in today.

By the end of the end of the nineteenth century, Gebser recognized that our rigid-minded, objectifying, and reductionist oriented civilization was going through some changes. At that time, there were signs that a new mutation of consciousness was emerging. It was becoming abundantly

evident in art, music, law, and mathematics (Combs, 2009). In these changes, Gebser saw the break-up of the rigid, controlling, and compartmentalizing *mental structure* – the consciousness structure in which women's oppression has mainly occurred – as it slowly yields to the *integral structure* of consciousness. Such mutational times, Gebser (1949/1985) advises, can be chaotic and destructive, with a “loss and renunciation of once legitimate values; and a rise of the devalued and worthless” (p. 295). “If mankind can endure the new tensions...[resulting from] the irruption,” then the dissolution of the *mental structure* will give rise to a new thought system, a new consciousness structure (Gebser, 1949/1985, p. 297). If not, the tensions will destroy “man and the earth” (Gebser, pp. 297-298).

As briefly discussed above, women have been written out of history, degraded, objectified, and even violently abused for more than two thousand years. Even so, it was only in relatively recent history that women began to reject unequal treatment and push for gender-equality in the form of the vote, property ownership, legal rights, and employment. Philosopher and historian Richard Tarnas (1991) asks why “pervasive masculinity” was invisible to past generations and has only become intolerable now (p. 445). Citing Hegel he answers, “[A] civilization cannot become conscious of itself...until it is so mature that it is approaching its own death” (Tarnas, 1991, p. 445). Consciousness scholar Sean Kelly (2021) treats the modern enigma as a “planetary initiation,” which may require a universal brush with death to yield transformation (pp. 164-165).

If more proof is necessary that oppression of women signals the disintegration of the *mental structure*, one need only look at

modern statistics of violent crimes against women, a historical trend that is escalating. Half of all women in the United States (hereinafter, “U.S.”) have been physically attacked by an intimate partner (Lemon, 2001). If one looks at U.S. women who are or have been married, the statistics are even worse (Lemon, 2001). Two-thirds of U.S. women who are separated or divorced “report having experienced physical assault in their relationships” (Lemon, 2001, p. 17). Considering that many women have children who are also impacted by family violence, these statistics show that intimate violence is escalating on an exponentially tragic scale.

With all the above evidence in mind, I posit that women's historical oppression, mistreatment, and the emergence of women's awareness are tangible signals that the *mental structure* of consciousness is disintegrating. The above discussion, and Gebser and Hegel's warnings signal that a collapse of the *mental structure* is imminent. The question then, is how we might encourage or hasten the assimilation of the *integral structure*, the subject of the following two sections.

Connection to Magic and Mythical Consciousness

Within this section I offer relief in the form of positive historical counter examples to the prior section's discussion of women's historical mistreatment. These counter examples are illustrations of what Jung might characterize as *cultural* individuation, a concept which speaks to the reason or unique purpose in life (Kelly, 1993). Despite oppression for the last two thousand or more years, women have consistently risen to create the best of any situation afforded them. They survived, fought, worshipped, ruled, became educated (predominantly behind closed doors), educated their

children, became farmers, healers, and traders, and in more recent history fought for advancement and equality.

The phrase *conscious connection*, which I use to describe women's interconnection to others and the world, was introduced in the *Consciousness and Awareness* section, above. It is not a new phrase but one which is being repurposed as a description of women's historical consciousness or latent knowledge. Catherine Keller (1988), a constructive theologian, develops a theme around this topic, calling this form of connection a "cosmic tapestry" (pp. 157-160). Keller (1988) does not base her analysis on an historical evaluation, as I do, but on her own theory of feminism and "feminist sensibility" (p. 2). Charlene Spretnak (2011) describes women's connection to others and the natural world as "deeply relational" (p. 191). I integrate each of these author's ideas in the phrase *conscious connection* to describe women's historical attribute of intentional kinship to other family members, friends, ideas, purpose, nature, and a life that comes from piecing together moments of embedded presence and deep interconnection.

Women in history had a *conscious connection* with life, typically performing jobs which provided an important service to humanity, their children or families, their farm and domesticated animals, their group, the church, and/or the extended community. Unlike men's history of separation and individualism, historical women were almost always dedicated to their groups or families. *Conscious connection*, as a way of interacting with the world, is a remnant of the *magic structure* of consciousness maintained by women through history. It is a cultural inheritance of serving humanity in a way that brings a synchronistic value and presence-in-connection often missing from

modern thought and life, a hidden gem which lies in wait of reawakening. In my brief descriptions of women-in-history below, each have elements which illustrate *conscious connection*.

Another element introduced in the section *Consciousness and Awareness*, above, and illustrated in the historical stories of women's triumph toward cultural individuation below is *participatory consciousness*, a phrase I use to describe a presence in the moment, an internalized manner of looking at life. This process is a way of discovering knowledge through a connection to the soul. This participatory process yields a knowledge which can uncover beauty, wisdom, and evolutionary truths undiscoverable in any other manner. Reaching this soul force is to touch that which birthed the divine. Thus, it is an unconscious archetypal force seen as being fundamentally feminine. *Participatory consciousness* is a key element from the *mythic structure* of consciousness passed down through cultural history by women. I present it in this essay for the purpose of unveiling its truths as applied to women's historical consciousness, and with the hope that it may be reintegrated into modern consciousness.

Rudolf Steiner (1994a, 1994b, 2006a, 2006b, 2008) and Carl Jung (1997a, 1997b) approach the concept of *participatory consciousness* through imagination, intuition, and the knowledge of the soul as being in deep concert with life. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (2009) believed the process was simultaneously participatory and intuitive. His perception was that one's attention becomes so closely in concert, in unison, with the object or phenomena that a spiritual bond yielding otherwise unattainable knowledge develops (Goethe, 2009). G.W.F. Hegel (1807/1977) describes

the result of consciously participating as resulting in “absolute knowing,” a knowledge which is “*felt to be true*...as [in] something sacred that is *believed*” (pp. 485, 487, italics in original). Owen Barfield (1965/1988) referred to “*original participation*” as an “extra-sensory relation between man and the phenomena” (p. 40). Sean Kelly (1993) and Richard Tarnas (1991) agree that if *participatory* mental processing is directed simultaneously inward and outward, a presence and spiritual connection is created which can lead to new knowledge. Each of these authors adds a different piece to understanding the importance of *participatory consciousness* and the *mystical structure*.

The historical notes that follow illustrate women across the ages consistently responding with *conscious connection* and *participatory consciousness* to their circumstances, resources, families, groups, and their own perceived purpose in life. These are cultural illustrations of ways women historically sought individuation in answer to oppressive circumstances. Although some of the below descriptions may seem like old news to modern thinkers, historical women were actually innovative. They *participated* with their circumstances and creatively carved out jobs which were of high value to their groups and/or families. The following brief review illustrates that throughout history women demonstrated both *conscious connection* and *participatory consciousness*, key elements of the *magic* and *mythical structures* of consciousness, respectively. Historical women lived not in a fragile coddling manner, but one which was consistent with purpose, truth, beauty, and unity of spirit, things all noticeably lacking in modern consciousness (Lachman, 2015, 2018; Raine, 1985, 2020; Steiner, 1909/1922).

Amazon Women: Contrary to popular belief, roaming tribes of nomadic horse women, who the Greeks called Amazons, actually existed. The revered Amazon women of legends, women of the Eurasian steppes who terrified Greek officials, have been confirmed by archeological evidence (Mayor; 2014). Many such groups of women were recorded in other parts of the world as well. It seems these women were largely forgotten, perhaps due to their rebellious spirit. Yet, the archaeological findings are indisputable. Women, likely those whose temperament did not fit well with farming or domestic chores, did in fact keep a nomadic life dedicated to their group.

Warrior Women: While it does not seem to be widely known, there was no lack of queens on the battlefield in ancient times. There were great warrior queens, among whom are Catherine the Great of Russia, Countess Caterina Sforza of Italy, modern “war queen” Margaret Thatcher and more (Jordan & Jordan, 2020). Archeological history shows that there were Viking warrior women (Brown, 2021), Celtic warrior women, Mongolian warrior women, and many more who abounded the battlefields (Davis-Kimball & Behan, 2002). Like the Amazons, these were women who pushed societal boundaries.

Women Mystics: No book learning, writing, businesses, nor even paid jobs were open to most women. Even so, this did not stop them from desiring to achieve in the ways that they conceived possible. European women mystics generally followed Christian teachings. They learned the work from audible sources and vowed devotion to the spiritual, seeking to become one with divinity (Lerner, 1993). Women mystics charted “new experiences of the divine” in ways men of the same time period could not (Petroff, 1994, p. 5). They lived lives of

service-to-humanity, providing shelter, teachings, and countless other resources for those in need while affirming the “primacy of the inner world” (Underhill, 1990, p. vii). There is a strong undercurrent across multiple generations of women mystics which shows their devotion to a concept termed “original participation” hundreds of years later by Owen Barfield (1965/1988, p. 40).

Writers and Thinkers: There were few writers and intellectual women but, they did exist. Those educated few either had a very supportive families, they wrote under a man's name, or they were of noble birth. In the last few hundred years, women have made enormous progress in these career and life choices. In spite of historical oppression, women writers, philosophers, healers, business women, musicians, and thinkers strove for more of all life's experiences (McAllister, 1996).

Farmers, Healers, and Fabric Makers: For many women, few things were options other than embracing child bearing and rearing, household chores, farm work, and keeping a husband's sexual appetite satisfied. Under different circumstances, many women might have chosen different paths. Yet with few options, women embraced their lots in life by creating an ever more perfected domestic path (Lerner, 1993), specifically contributing medicinal herbs and healing from their farming endeavors (Federici, 2014). Creating fabric and thread was historically women's work, which due to its expendable nature, created an economic stronghold for their families (Barber, 1995; Postrel, 2020). It should not be assumed that domesticity on a farm, the predominant way of post-nomadic life, was an easy path of nurturing children, tending embroidery, and creating herbal remedies. Among other things, a farm woman's work involved hand

plowing fields, and domesticating, shearing, and butchering animals. Her work was an essential contribution of both food and trading goods, a position intimately tied to her family's economic well-being. Coming out of a nomadic lifestyle, women created these new-at-the-time farming and domestic jobs of economic importance. This perspective illustrates the significant *participatory* thought that resulted in the creation of women's positions, which were new and innovative at the time.

The above described historical occupations illustrate women's historical responses to life circumstances. Their historical behavior consistently demonstrates women's *conscious connection* and *participatory consciousness* in response to their outer worlds. Although deprived of many opportunities, “women thought their way out of patriarchy; stubbornly and persistently, like drops of water wearing out solid rock, they challenged patriarchal definitions, prescriptions, and explanations” (Lerner, 1993). While women's presence is rarely mentioned in history books, they were most assuredly present, acting and reacting with heart and soul shaping their environments in ways which demonstrated connection, courage, imagination, tenacity, creativity, and a host of other descriptors.

Importantly, women's historical response to oppression carried forward in time links to the *magic* and *mystical structures* of consciousness, which are relatively rare in today's world but nevertheless crucial components of the *integral structure*. Recall, from the *Consciousness and Awareness* section above that *integral* consciousness may be achieved only when the consciousness perspectives of the *magic* and *mythic structures* and the current *mental structure* unite as one. As discussed, women hold the key to ushering in *integral*

consciousness because it is women who embody the latent knowledge of the *magic* and *mythical structures*, ancient consciousness structures necessary to achieve *integral* consciousness. It is the feminine structures or manners of being, says historian Anne Baring (2020), which “stands for a new planetary consciousness” (p. 221).

How might these consciousness attributes in modern women be rediscovered and assimilated? That subject is investigated in the next section.

Consciousness Bridge to the Ancient Past

I introduce knowledge of pre-historical gender neutral societies, along with the modern concepts of morphic resonance and the collective unconscious in this section. Knowledge of ancient gender neutral societies is linked with the proposition that memories of such societies are stored in our unconscious minds, even in our very genes, merely awaiting retrieval. As mentioned above in the *Consciousness and Awareness* section, awareness changes perception, which changes the perspective of one's outward reality. Possessing knowledge of the past provides more than mere facts, it changes our conscious reality of the present with respect to the past by shifting the perspective of truth.

In what archeologists call *pre-history*, there is ample evidence of gender-equality, including evidence of matriarchal societies. In Neolithic Europe, people were interconnected with each other and the earth (Blackie, 2019; Neumann, 1955/2015), living peaceably, with intentionality and presence,

¹ Despite the mountain of supporting evidence Gimbutas accumulated, her work was disparaged by others who claimed it was invalid. Graeber and Wengrow (2021) speak to the criticisms and claim the critics are misinformed. A recent doctoral dissertation

in “gynocentric” societies (Eisler, 1987/1995, p. 43). These were times when women were held in positions of egalitarianism, valued for their societal importance. Archeological evidence show that goddesses, as opposed to gods, were worshipped and that women of Old Europe were held in high regard (Baring & Cashford, 1993; Campbell, 2013; Cichon, 2022; Eisler, 1987/1995; Gero & Conkey, 1991/2002). Artifacts from multiple global regions suggest ancient peoples lived in matrilineal or matriarchate societies (Gimbutas, 1982/1992, 1999; Stone, 1976). Archeologist Marija Gimbutas (1982/1992) spent a lifetime pursuing the meaning of goddess statues and confirmed the fact that matrilineal and matriarchal societies existed.¹ The number of goddess statues recovered and accounted for is frankly overwhelming, including nearly every form and fashion of goddess from fertility to animals, to life and death (Gimbutas, 1982/1992). Goddess worshipping continued until as late as 500 C.E., indicating that there was a historical reverence for women's gift of fertility up until that time (Stone, 1976). An expanded exploration of this material is important to show that our world once embraced gender equality.

What does knowledge of the ancient past, times in which our ancestors lived in gender equality and matriarchal societies worshipping goddesses as opposed to gods, have to do with women's consciousness? Evidence of pre-historical societies is important because past knowledge or memories stored within the human genetic code. Evidence suggests that the unconscious mind stores ancestral memories (Jung, 1997b; Sheldrake, 2012). This means

also speaks directly to this point in support of Gimbutas' research being valid and crucial to the fields of archaeology and history. See Marler, J. (2022) in references.

that modern women's unconscious mind contains attributes from ancestral sources of pre-historical gender neutral societies. Such memories, accessible through the unconscious mind, provide an access bridge to and anchor for modern times.

This concept of an access bridge across time can be explained by the concepts of morphic resonance and the collective unconscious. Morphic resonance is a scientific explanation introduced by Rupert Sheldrake (2020) which suggests there's an intrinsic memory in nature. Sheldrake's theory proves that ancient memories are preserved across time. "[Our] minds are extended through space by morphic resonance from the past" (Sheldrake, 2020, 21:05). Some of this memory is stored in the unconscious mind, having arrived there through the ages. It finds its home in our "cultural inheritance," our ancient memories (Sheldrake, 2012, p. 295). Such ancient memories run like a background program on our computers. They are built into our inner most being, running invisibly and without being registered in the conscious mind. Using an analysis of mitochondrial deoxyribonucleic acid, mtDNA, it has been proven that ancient ancestral genes have been inherited (MacLeod, 2014). "Each of us carries within his own nervous system the whole history of biological life on the planet" (Combs, 2002, p. 27). Through morphic resonance, ancient memories from times long past build on earlier memories inherited to ultimately arrive at the advanced form of thinking we have today (Sheldrake, 2012).

C.G. Jung (1997b) asserts that such ancient memories of the "collective unconscious" belong to a "group of individuals," a "whole nation," or the "whole of mankind" (p. 56). The unconscious mind stores memories not acquired during one's lifetime, but rather

"innate forms and instincts" handed down and stored generationally in the unconscious mind (Jung, 1997b, p. 56). These instincts arrive through human inheritance of "primordial images," as handed down generationally through the ages, a "whole treasure house of mythological motifs" which do not rise to the surface of consciousness but lie as an underlying basis of thinking and are accounted for only by the "history of the human mind" (Jung, 1997b, p. 56).

With this concept of a conscious connection over time and space, there is a possibility of understanding and assimilating the past to connect ancient knowledge to our current consciousness. To this point, authors Lewis-Williams and Pearce (2018) ask, "In what sense do we have a neurological bridge to the Neolithic?" (p. 40). Psychologist Imants Baruss (2020) agrees that past memories can cross over the ages, suggesting that there are thousands of examples to support this claim. Jean Gebser (1949/1985) might characterize ancient memories coming alive as *The Muse*, "the latent memory of the world, the remembrance of creativity, and of all that has been and is still to be effected in the world" (p. 319).

Jung believed knowledge or insight could be derived by uniting the conscious mind with the unconscious mind through a process he called active imagination, a method which reveals the root of otherwise incomprehensible problems and memories stored in the unconscious (Chodorow, 1997). Using Jung's concept of connecting the conscious mind with unconscious memories, ancient gender neutral societies can provide an anchor of awareness to modern times and an invitation to embrace gender neutrality as part of our historic culture.

As an important final note in this section, I have heretofore discussed ancient knowledge, consciousness, and primordial memories in terms of women's consciousness. Such things are not exclusively the domain of women. Ancient knowledge, consciousness, and primordial memories are stored and inherited in the unconscious mind of all sexes. Because women will more naturally identify with women's history and knowledge than will men, and because women have been acculturated differently, these ancient memories may be more accessible to women. Hence, my claim that women have the capacity to lead the way toward *integral* consciousness is due to women's motivation and acculturation in the pursuit of such things.

Conclusion

With the understanding that awareness changes thoughts, one of the main goals in this essay was to promote awareness of women's history as a provision toward up-leveling women's consciousness, the end goal being the attainment of *integral* consciousness. In taking on this task, the study uncovered suggestions of forgotten or hidden pockets of women's knowledge, memory, and the associated structures of consciousness. These hidden pockets are the cloud's silver lining, the unlikely gifts linked to historical oppression and mistreatment, preserved across the ages through women's cultural consciousness, primordial memories, and the unconscious.

In particular, this introductory research unearthed its discoveries as critical components to the attainment of *integral* consciousness. It showed that women are the keepers of historical attributes of consciousness, in some sense guardians of the *magic* and *mythical structures* of

consciousness. It reached for support from primordial memories, linking ancient gender-neutral societies across time through a connection to the unconscious mind. In doing so, this research promotes awareness of ancient societies, where awareness is another critical component to the attainment of *integral* consciousness.

This essay explored the possibility that our societies may be witnessing the end of a consciousness era. Building on Geber's claim that the *mental structure* is collapsing and the *integral structure* is emerging, it was shown that women's historical oppression and mistreatment may be evidence to this end. But, the end of the *mental structure* of consciousness does not necessarily mean a complete breakdown of planetary thought. If the struggle and tensions of the dissolution of the *mental structure* can be endured, Gebser predicts it will give rise to a new structure of consciousness. Accordingly, I postulate that the discovery of women's latent knowledge and ancient memories are hidden gifts that may serve to hasten the assimilation of *integral* consciousness.

On the Horizon

This introductory study is the first in a series linking women's history, latent women's knowledge, primordial memories, and the evolution of consciousness. An expanse of current and future work remains which will emanate in the following forms and stages.

My current work investigates in more depth the correlation between women's latent knowledge, the epistemology that defines women's historical consciousness, and the connection of these studies with the evolution of consciousness. In particular, the interest is to use the latent knowledge from *conscious connection* and *participatory consciousness* as leverage points for

rediscovering the *magic* and *mythical structures*, the goal being a movement toward the *integral structure* through its components.

Future work involves expanding the discussion of ancient matrilineal, matriarchal, and gender neutral societies. The purpose in exploring such ancient memories is the heightened awareness they offer. Alongside this material, Sheldrake's and Jung's work with primordial memories and the unconscious mind, respectively, will be expanded to show how revealing knowledge from primordial memories may be utilized as a means of up-leveling modern consciousness.

Gebser and many others have provided ample evidence of the crumbling *mental structure* of consciousness and the emergence of the *integral structure*. This work will be magnified in scope and applied to women's history and modern events, the idea being to show a strong correlative and indicative pattern of the cultural consciousness trend with regard to women's history and the future of consciousness.

To tie this research together, awareness is the key. Therefore a discussion of greater depth into awareness and *integral* consciousness will be undertaken, along with the science of neuroplasticity and how brain function affects the mind and consciousness. All of the above research will be integrated into the discussion on awareness, as the point which unites and drives it all. Reclaiming a connecting to the *magic* and *mythical structures* through women's history provides missing components of *integral* consciousness. Uncovering primordial memories returns another missing link. Having an understanding that women's history and current events may be signals of the

crumbling *mental structure* and reemergence of a new consciousness structure brings a sense of urgency to how we approach cultural consciousness. The final point that links all the research together – women's history, latent women's knowledge, primordial memories, and the evolution of consciousness – is awareness. It is awareness that offers the beginning of new thought patterning and growth, which allows a pathway toward the *integral structure* of consciousness.

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