

The *Jean Gebser*
Society



Call for Papers
Gebser Society Conference
19th – 21st June, 2008
La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia

The Jean Gebser Society is welcoming abstracts for the 2008 conference. Though the theme is "Globalisation," submissions on subjects other than the conference theme are welcome, but should demonstrate a clear relevance to the work of Jean Gebser.

Integrity: Truth, Reality and Globalisation

XLV
Great Perfection seems chipped,
Yet use will not wear it out:
Great fullness seems empty,
Yet use will not drain it;
Great straightness seems bent;
Great skill seems awkward:
Great eloquence seems tongue-tied.
Restlessness overcomes cold; stillness overcomes heat.
Limpid and still,
One can be a leader in the empire
(Lao Tze, 1963, 52)

The wisdom of Lao Tze as written in the Tao Te Ching provides insight into for understanding the phenomena of globalisation and our reactions to and with it.

Anthony Giddens in *Runaway World*¹ discusses how globalisation is reshaping our lives. He suggests that "Globalisation is not incidental to our lives today. It is a shift in our very life circumstances. It is the way we now live". Those who are discontent with globalisation see it as a myth of great perfection, but in reality is "chipped". The inequality of globalisation is what we focus on for we see that where there is great wealth this is enormous poverty (Great fullness seems empty). Giddens' understanding of the phenomenon of globalisation is that it "... is a complex set of processes, not a single one"². His argument is that "globalisation isn't only about what is 'out there', remote and far away from the individual. It is an 'in here' phenomenon too, influencing intimate and personal aspects of our lives"³. This phenomenon operates in "a contradictory or oppositional fashion". According to Giddens "most people think of globalisation as

¹ Giddens, A. (2002). *Runaway world: How globalisation is reshaping our lives*. London: Profile. p.12.

² Ibid, p.12

³ Ibid, p. 12

simply 'pulling away' power or influence from local communities and nations into the global arena. ... Globalisation ... pulls upwards and pushes downwards, creating new pressures for local autonomy. ... Globalisation is the reason the revival of local cultural identities in different parts of the world"⁴. For Giddens "globalisation also squeezes sideways. It creates new economic and cultural zones within and across nations"⁵. This phenomenon could also be described as "Great straightness seems bent; Great skill seems awkward; Great eloquence seems tongue-tied".

Although many may think globalisation is a Western driven phenomenon Giddens also highlights how "globalisation today is only partly westernisation. Globalisation is becoming increasingly decentered. Its effects are felt as much in Western countries as elsewhere (p.16)⁶. This decentring has led people to think of the world as "being flattened" or as *one world ready or not*⁷ (Greider). Perhaps we are being challenged culturally and as individuals to acknowledge that restlessness overcomes cold; stillness overcomes heat. Limpid and still, one can be a leader in the empire. Perhaps it is in our most limpid and still moments that we can reflect enough on what Greider suggests is the challenge of "one world" which is "to create the standards for a progressive system that everyone can trust, that does not leave anyone out. To accomplish this people have to re-imagine the dimensions of their own world, to free themselves of buried cultural and racial assumptions inherited from the colonial past..." He warns however, that "the largest barrier to a shared prosperity is neither physical nor economic, but the limitations imposed by old ideas, the mental boundaries drawn around what people believe is possible"⁸.

Globalisation is perhaps a significant indicator of our cultural reality being in liminality. A period of liminality is where fragmentation and disaffected feelings are experienced. Jean Gebser⁹ suggested that letting go of one reality is fraught with tension. His view was that if we denied (what he saw as) the inevitable emerging integral reality, the more difficult the transition would be.

The Gebser society extends this invitation to academics from a number of different disciplines. Gebser, in order to have an understanding of cultural consciousness and integrality himself drew on:

- The Natural Sciences (maths, physics, biology)
- The Sciences of the mind (Psychology, Philosophy)
- The Social Sciences (Jurisprudence, Sociology and Economics)
- Dual Sciences (Quantum Biology, Psychosomatic Medicine, Para Psychology)
- The Arts (Music, Architecture, Painting, Literature)

⁴ Ibid, p. 13

⁵ Ibid, p.13

⁶ Ibid, p. 16

⁷ Greider, W. (1997). *One world, ready or not: The manic logic of global capitalism*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

⁸ Ibid, p. 322

⁹ Gebser, J. (1949/85). *The ever-present origin* (N. Barstad & A. Mickunas, Trans.). Athens, Ohio: University of Ohio Press.

Gebser carefully selected the term *structures of consciousness* to emphasise that what he was doing was “...merely an attempt to structure events for convenient accessibility”¹⁰. He did not believe structures of consciousness to be associated with human development or progress. Each structure (*archaic, magical, mythical, mental* and *integral*) has its deficient and efficient characteristics, expression of reality, and sense of truth, space and time.

It is the aim of the Gebser Society to offer a conference with the theme of globalisation that will allow for the multi-perspectival, if not a-perspectival forum where papers can be presented and discussed in an air of scholarship and collegiality.

In response to this call for abstracts and papers, please send your abstracts and/or papers in Microsoft Word compatible format for review to:

Andrea Gallant , Ph.D.
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Abstracts Due: February 15th

Notifications of acceptance should be received by authors by March 11th

If you would like a conference panel to respond formally to your presentation paper this will need to be circulated to the panel members

Papers Due: April 18th

¹⁰ Ibid, p.37