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Centaur Mind: A Glimpse into an Integrative Structure of Consciousness

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Abstract: Jean Gebser's theory of consciousness suggests that we are experiencing a new era in the history of consciousness. Human consciousness moves like a pendulum. The current Integral Structure of Consciousness is not unprecedented, yet we are experiencing it in a multi-layered, deeper, and vaster way. Centaurs are imaginal creatures that first appeared within the Mythical Structure of Consciousness, making a bridge between the unity of the Magical and the duality of Mental structures. In this paper, I view the centaurs through the lenses of mythology and archetypal depth psychology and discuss the critical role of this mythic figure in the integration between the civil and the primitive aspects of human consciousness. Centaurs have always been about integration with our animalistic side, but are they bringing a specifically necessary gift to our time of integral consciousness? Are centaurs returning to human consciousness? If so, should we and can we create a more integrated centaur myth?

Keywords: Jean Gebser, integral structure of consciousness, mythology, archetype, Jungian depth psychology, creating new myth, centaur, Chiron, time, somatic, diaphany, and the wounded healer.

Jean Piaget (1896-1980) believed that our sensory and inner experiences including thoughts, feelings, and memories, are refracted through our habitual patterns of interpretation. These patterns change as we grow and mature through infancy, childhood, and adolescence. They determine our experience of reality to such an extent that we literally live in different experiential worlds. Jean Gebser (1905-1973) viewed these patterns of interpretations as "Structures of Consciousness." A structure of consciousness "refers to the way in which the mind takes hold of an experience and makes it its own... the way the mind interprets the moment, modifying the raw stuff of experience according to its own habits and categories" (Combs, 2009, Kindle. loc. 1084). Gebser recognized a progression of such structures that seem to have unfolded, step by step, across the long course of human history. The Gebserian structures of consciousness include: archaic, magic, mythic, mental, and integral. These stages identify an entire experiential landscape with different ways of understanding and relating to the world. Gebser (1949/1985) stated that they also identify historical epochs in which each structure rose to the status of a dominant worldview. He viewed art as a major manifestation of these structures. Although each structure is dominant in a certain era there are considerable overlaps. That means people live in different structures of consciousness, previous and future, within a certain epoch.

Geber did not claim to know much about the archaic structure as it is close to the sleep consciousness. “The archaic structure represents a transitional consciousness from pre-human hominids to the earliest human beings” (Combs, 2009, Kindle loc. 2328). According to Geber the entire Paleolithic cultures operated in the magic mode of consciousness in which natural events like an eclipse, a lightning strike, a rainbow, or an earthquake could be a sign predicting future events such as someone’s death or a good day of hunting. The magical world was operating on telepathy, synchronicity, and reading omens. Synchronistic events did not involve a dialogue between humans and the world, but a monologue within a united mind/body which included humans, animals, plants, rocks, and everything else. Shamans were the heart of the operating system working as spiritual guides, healers, and manipulators of the magical laws. They took care of people’s spiritual and materialistic needs and would even lead their souls to their destination in the afterlife. They were psychopomps, who could enter altered states of consciousness and receive help from totem animals as well as natural and ancestral spirits. “Geber considered modern ‘witchcraft,’ which involves the manipulation of nature rather than working in simpatico with it, to be a lesser and degenerate form of the original use of magic” (Combs, 2009, Kindle loc. 1156).

In the magical world, time and space were yet to be solidified into the Newtonian worldview that characterizes the mental consciousness. Time was cyclic; based on the succession of the days, the sun and the moon, and the seasons. “Time and space are less definite and more permeable as well. This is the basis of magic: I do something here and now, and it has an effect, or more correctly speaking it is also taking place, somewhere else or at another time” (Combs, 2009, Kindle. loc. 1166). As we look at a cave wall paintings picturing an animal being shut through the neck with an arrow, we think the artist had painted how the animals was killed or was to be killed, but in the magical world it happened in a kind of eternity, in a timeless and spaceless zone. Carl Jung (1928) called this zone “Psychoid,” (1969, para. 840) Henry Corbin named it “Mundus Imaginalis,” (1964, p.1) and Gebser (1949/1985) referred to it as the “Ever-present Origin” (xxviii).

With the beginning of the Neolithic period, or New Stone Age, there is a rise in the mythic imagination. Agricultural seasonal rituals might be the birth place of story-telling and myth-forming. Unlike the Paleolithic art which centers around the physical body of animals and rarely depicts humans, mythic consciousness brings forth grand mythic creatures, humans, and multiple hybrid forms of them. Centaurs emerge from human consciousness as the mergence between human and horse.

Things happen in mythic time in the opening phrases such as “long ago and far away” or “once upon a time” as if the past is still happening. In *The Ever-Present Origin*, Gebser wrote, “Whereas the distinguishing characteristic of the magic structure was the emergent awareness of nature, the essential characteristic of the mythical structure is the emergent awareness of soul. Magic man's sleep-like consciousness of natural time is the precondition for mythical man's coming to awareness of soul” (p. 61).

Mental consciousness rose up when people started answering basic questions about the reason behind natural phenomena and the logical course of events. We put a hold on our magical and mythical imagination and began to reason objectively. This, gradually, led to new and more logically systematic theories of the material world. “This does not mean that people could not, or did not, use reason to solve problems during earlier times. It just means that such reason was not

the final arbitrator of truth” (Combs, 2009, Kindle loc. 1246). This was also not the end of previous modes. There are many people who even today base their judgments on magical or mythical consciousness. Mental mode was about dualism: This and that, right and wrong, now and then, or here and there. The solidification of the concepts of time and space was manifested in the dominance of linear time and the appearance of perspectival view in art.

Each structural mode determines how the world is perceived. The magical perceived events as the operation of uncanny occult forces. The mythical sought meaning through mystic images and stories which were more about wisdom and truth than being about facts. The mental mode, as our present structure, seeks rational explanations. The incoming integral consciousness allows the free expression of all the other structures without being captured by any of them.

The Integral Structure of Consciousness

Jean Gebser (1949) believed that around the end of nineteenth century, a new structure of consciousness came into existence. Comparing to the perspectival mental structure, this new form was highly flexible and was capable of holding variety of perspectives at once. Finding a diverse range of evidence in many fields including jurisprudence, science, mathematics, and all quarters of art including music, poetry, and painting, Gebser called this new structure the integral consciousness.

There was a certain nimbleness, an agile movement from one perspective, idea, or point of view to another which gave our consciousness, as well as the art pieces being created, a capacity of holding the opposites. This swiftness which made things happen almost spontaneously helped our consciousness escape linear time as conceptualized by Newtonian Perspectival mindset. “Rather than a scalar quantity that can be measured and represented, for example in a Cartesian coordinate system along beside length and depth, time becomes a poetic-like quality” (Combs, 2009, Kindle loc. 1327). An example of this is how we may talk about a snowy night. The mental perspectival would specify the time the snow fell: It snowed between two and four a.m. this morning. Combs continued that the integral point of view would emphasize on the experience of a snowy night “rather than abstracting an event outside of experience that presumably occurred during a particular episode of clock time” (Kindle loc. 1327).

This agile and almost simultaneous presence delivers us to a time and space in which we are here and now, but almost there and then. This is a liminal experience in both time and space. In Latin, *limen* means threshold and liminal is an adjective describing things that exist at the threshold and in the in-between space. When talking about ceremonies which include altered states, the word “liminal” may be used to describe the ambiguity or disorientation that happens in the middle of a ceremony or ritual when the participants’ loci of consciousness are no longer in the pre-ritual status, but have not yet arrived at the next. This has a quality of disorientation, being lost, or “not being there yet.” Liminal can be considered as an experience of occupying a position on both sides of a boundary or threshold. In Jungian depth psychology it is known as “holding the space between two opposites.” This space is the alchemical vessel of creating anew. The liminal experience is considered luminous. It is not just two or more different things sitting side by side. It is the merging of them and the emerging of anew. It has magical alchemical qualities. The ability to hold the tension between two is a necessary skill and capacity to obtain before delving into the complexity thinking required in the Integral consciousness. The

in-between experience is intense, yet magical. The opposites create tension, but the real transformation comes through holding the tension. The emergence of the new out of the opposites adheres to the simultaneous pain and joy luminal experience of birth-giving. Geber (1949) referred to this luminous quality as "Diaphany," "a translucent spiritual light that shines through the world of integral experience" (Combs, 2009, Kindle loc. 137).

Geber viewed the intensified quality of what he called the "Eruption of Time"

Related to the new emergence of the concept of time. He viewed our time-anxiety as the most conspicuous sign of entering the integral mode. We are constantly busy and have no time, always trying to speed up and save time, and obsessively fighting against aging. The eruption of time is the ultimate destroyer of realities that were once seemed secure, yet it is only destructive if we fail to comprehend other perceptions of time including Gebser's idea of the ever-present origin. Our ability to recognize that we are composed of all forms of time, including the magic timelessness, the natural circular time, and the irrational mythical temporality, frees us from our extreme attachment to mental-linear time. Not many of us are even aware of the immeasurable loss of freedom caused by quantification of time. To be haunted by time, however, is also a sign of approaching integral structure. "Only man today who is now awakening or mutating towards the aperspectival consciousness takes note of every hour of his apparent lack of time that derives him to the brink of despair" (Gebser, as cited in Settegast, 2001, p. 114).

The world around us is increasingly becoming uncertain and ambiguous. Contradicting ideas seem to be simultaneously true and living side by side. Even the concept of time and space is crumbling down. However, within all these destabilizing times, there are moments when we realize that "the disruption of space by time does not lead to emptiness or nothingness, but to transparency" (Gebser, as cited in Settegast, 2001, p. 114). All the perspectives of previous structures provide their own illusions. The unity we once lived in the magical structure has returned this time to be experienced consciously. It is during these moments that we no more see the world from a certain perspectival point of view. We are the world in its timeless spaceless existence. This is the translucent tacit knowing and being which Gebser called diaphanity. "Only as a whole man is man in a position to perceive the whole" (Gebser, as cited in Settegast, p. 114).

Geber(1949) viewed the idea of progression or expansion of consciousness "a spatially conceived quantification of consciousness and consequently an illusion" (Gebser, as cited in Settegast, 2001, p. 108). The word "progressive" is understood in a linear progression context. In reality, we often find ourselves in the same consciousness we had experienced before. We repeat the same mistakes, go through the same processes, and come to the same insights and recognitions times and times again. This is the way human consciousness works. The linear is actually circular. We repeat and we integrate on many levels until the circle becomes the spiral and we take a leap in consciousness. It seems that right before the integration there will be an intensified state of opposition between the to-be-integrated forces. This is when our capacity for holding the tension between the opposites comes in handy. Gebser stated that in the integral mode what we are dealing with "is an *intensification* of consciousness that is inclusive of all previous structures" (Settegast, 2001, p. 108). The examples of these intensification are everywhere. Magic consciousness showed us a unified world in which division and alienation was impossible. This view had no more substance than an idea or a dream, yet today it has become a scientific aim in Quantum physics and the String theory. The increasing interest in Joseph Campbell, C.G. Jung, and other

mythologists, depth psychologists, and story tellers is a resurgence of the mythic mode only in a more conscious level. Capitalism, with its extreme focus on numbers, facts, and mental rationality has taken over our globe and zeitgeist.

The fragmentation of structures of consciousness causes anxiety. Gebser warned that it is not uncommon to see reversions to earlier modes; a promise of salvation from the ravages of the dissolving structure. In particular, the current transition to the complex integral structure is not an easy one. "Efforts to retreat to the earlier mythic mode of consciousness may take the form of fierce nationalism or religious fundamentalism while regression to the magical structure could manifest as drug or alcohol abuse" (Settegast, 2001, p. 111). The epidemic of spirituality as a substitute for religion as well as denying the ego as a healthy structure of psyche through the imaginary ideal of getting ego-less may also be considered as a reversion to the magical state of unity with the whole. All these elements from different eras may intensify before integration.

Centaurs

The Myth. Centaurs are liminal luminous emergences of our mythic mind. As one of the first human-animal hybrids appeared in Greco-Roman mythology, they were depicted with the naked torso of a man and the lower body of a horse. They were known to be as wild as untamed horses inhibiting remote regions from Mount Pelion in Thessaly forest in Greece to Cyprus Island.

The term Human-animal hybrid refers to an entity that incorporates elements from both human and animal. Hybrids have always been a common theme in story-telling and a curious element in mythic consciousness. Folkloric stories and traditions of all ancient cultures have provided a rich context of popular tales in which animals and humans constantly shapeshift into each other and sometimes form a permanent merge. Their existence is based on a fundamental idea that there is no strong divide between us and animals. Hybrids are the "what if" question a barefoot human would ask seeing hooves and wings. "Their hair is like women's hair, teeth like lions', and scales like iron breastplates" (Bible, Rev. 9:8-9). "Their wings make a sound like the sound of chariots charging into battle, and their tails have stingers like scorpion tails" (Rev. 9:9-10).

As the myth goes, king Ixion who had thrown his father-in-law into fire was not only forgiven by Zeus, but also got invited to the great god's feast. Hera let Zeus know that the ungrateful king had sexual intentions towards her. Being in an intoxicated good mood Zeus created a cloud that looked exactly like Hera to check Ixion's intentions. The drunken king made love to the cloud who later gave birth to "Centaurus;" the father of all centaur tribes.

Centaurs live in tribes inhabiting remote locales, such as mountain caves, woodlands, and sometimes secluded pastures. One tribe inhabited the caves and forest of Thessaly where they could use rocks and branches to hunt wild animals like lions and tigers.

Another tribe, usually depicted horned and naked, lived in the island of Cyprus and were known as fertility deities. Some centaurs are pictured with pointed ears and snub noses suggesting they are part "Satyr." A satyr is a male nature spirit with a bestial face, pointed horse-like ears, snub nose, mane-like hair, and horse or goat legs and tail pictured naked with a permanent exaggerated erection. Satyrs are characterized by their ribaldry as well as loving wine, women, and festivities including dance and music. As the fun-loving companions of Dionysus,



Fig 1. *Battle of Centaurs and Wild Beasts*. 120-130 A.D. Staatliche Museum, Berlin, Germany.



Fig. 2. *Nymphs and Satyr*. William-Adolphe Bouguereau. 1873.

they often attempted to seduce and rape both nymphs and mortal women. Sometimes, they are shown masturbating, engaging in animalistic sexual behaviors, or bestiality (raping or abusing animals). Satyrs seem to be more on the bestial side of the hybrid.

Centaurs have a taste for wine which leads to cruder and more lustful behavior. When king Pirithus invited his half-brother centaurs to his wedding, they indulged too much of wine. Things got out of control when an intoxicated centaur named Eurytus attempted to violate the bride and others found the idea interesting to put into practice by raping female guests. Soon, the wedding turned into a battle zone in which many centaurs lost their lives to the men of Lapiths.



Fig. 4. *The Battle of the Lapiths and the Centaurs*, Sebastiano Ricci, early eighteenth century.

In another event, Hercules killed many centaurs. It was in his fourth labor that he met centaur Follis. Follis opened a bottle of wine given to him by Dionysus. The smell of the wine attracted the centaurs of the surrounding area making them hostile and attempting to steal the wine. Using the arrows dipped in the poisonous blood of monster Hydra, Hercules managed to kill most of them, but in the crossfire, he mistakenly hit Chiron, his brilliant centaur mentor.

Centaur and man. Centaurs were usually unsuccessful in their raping attempts and were killed by men who fought them because of their brutal bestial acts. In the picture below, the man and the centaur seem to hold each other in a ceremonial greeting, but looking at the centaur's left side a shaft is sticking out; a part of the spear the man had driven in. This serene looking encounter is in fact a battle scene. The centaur is already stricken and the man is certain to win out. Everywhere we look, from Parthenon to pottery and painting, men are killing centaurs.



Fig 3. One-piece cast bronze sculpture, Greece, mid-8th century B.C.

Prominent Centaurs. There is a handful of predominant centaur characters in Greek mythology. One of the centaurs killed by Hercules was Nessus. When Hercules and his wife Deianeira came across a river, Nessus offered to ferry them. He took the wife first and it wasn't before long that his intentions of abducting her became clear. This is another version of king Ixion's betrayal to Zeus. Hercules shot a Hydra-poisoned arrow into Nessus's chest. As Nessus laid to die, he committed his final act of malice. Knowing that his blood was infected by Hydra's poison, he told the wife to keep his blood to ensure that Hercules would be true to her forever. Later, foolishly believing him, Deianeira spread the blood on her husband's robe. When Hercules wore the robe, it burned his skin like a napalm bomb and caused him a painful death. Another prominent centaur was Follis, a wise centaur who fall into the same faith of being killed by Hercules's poisonous arrow. As he was examining the arrows, one hit his feet and killed him. Zeus placed him in the sky as the constellation Centaurus. Although centaurs represent animalistic masculinity, female centaurs did appear later in the literature.

Chiron. Chiron is undoubtedly the most famous of all centaurs. Unlike his barbaric kin, he is known for his tutorial talent, wisdom, prophecy, and knowledge of medicine. He was not a child of Centaurus, but the son of Chronos (the god of time and Zeus's father) and a nymph named Valera. The parents did not like his appearance. So, Chiron was adopted by Apollo, the sophisticated god of intelligence, music, and prophecy. Chiron is either depicted dressed in classy garments or in the shining armor of a general. He was the mentor of many heroes including Jason the Argonaut, Perseus (the killer of Medusa), Theseus (the killer of cow-man Minotaur), Achilles (the anointed hero of Troy), and even Hercules (the god of strength and heroes) who later killed Chiron by accident. Since he was immortal, the poisonous arrow that mistakenly hit Chiron did not kill him, yet it left him in unbearable pain. The pain was so excruciating that

Chiron decided to give up his immortality by sacrificing himself for the freedom of Prometheus, the bringer of fire of knowledge and civilization to human race. Zeus had sentenced Prometheus to eternal torment for his transgression by bounding him to a rock, where each day an eagle, the emblem of Zeus, was sent to devour his liver, which would regrow overnight to be eaten again the next day. The Greeks viewed the liver as the seat of emotions. Prometheus is also known as the one who established animal sacrifice. These heroes, specially Achilles and Hercules were Athena's favorites. As the goddess of wisdom and war Athena is known as a defendant of patriarchal values such as self-perseverance viewing emotions as weakness. After Chiron's death, Zeus placed him in the sky as the constellation Sagittarius.

Centaurs in Art. Throughout the art history, centaurs have been pictured drunk and violent raping women, fighting with each other, and getting massacred in battles with men. It is only in the modern art that they appear as lonesome sad creatures. Gustave Moreau's centaur bears the unbearable lightness of a dead poet's body. Odilon Redon's sophisticated centaurs read books, play the Cello, and hold hands romantically with a centaress lover.



Fig. 4. *Dead Poet Borne by Centaur*, Gustave Mureau, 1890

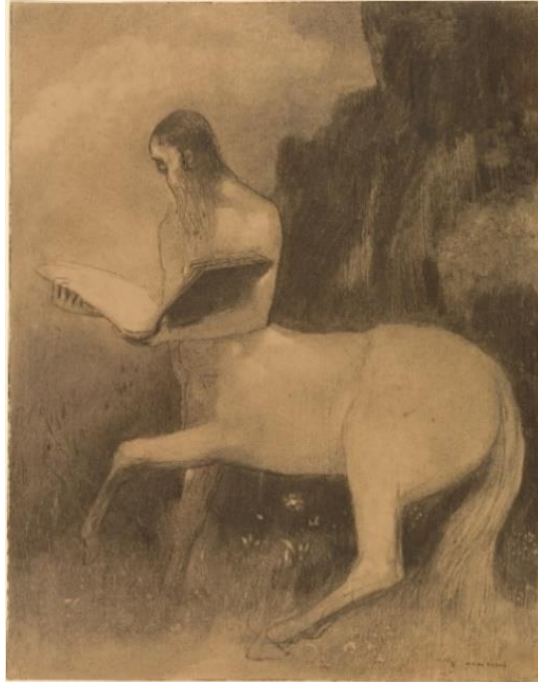


Fig 5. *Centaaur Reading*. Odilon Redon, 1880.

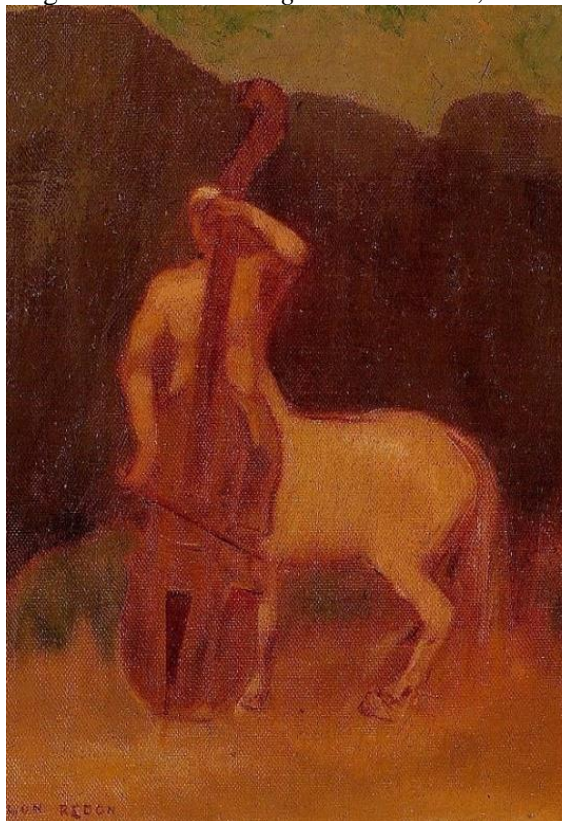


Fig. 6. *Centaaur with Cello*, O. Redon, 1910

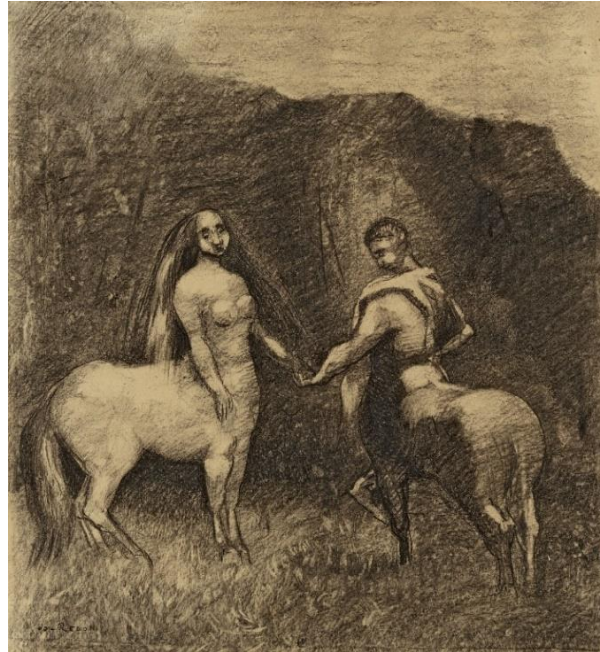


Fig.7. Centaur and Centauress, O. Redon, 1890.

Jungian Theory of Consciousness

Jungian psychology discusses human consciousness in four levels: Consciousness (ego), personal unconscious, collective unconscious, and the “Psychoid.” Psychoid refers to unconscious processes that are space-less, time-less, and unrepresentable in word, image, or number. Jung’s original idea of archetype, or what is called “Archetype as Such”, “Archetype Per Se”, or “Archetype Priori”, is psychoid. It is the idea or pattern that is forever unconscious. Jung wrote, “the archetype itself is psychoid, i.e, transcendental and thus relatively beyond the categories of number, space, and time. That means, it approximates to oneness and immutability” (Jung, 1976, p. 317). As Libido flows from psychoid towards the surface of consciousness, the invisible unknown takes form by borrowing images from the collective and personal unconscious. It dresses up in bone, flesh, and skin until it’s manifested as thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in our conscious ego. When we describe an archetype, it means that it already has elements of consciousness. That is not the archetype itself, but the archetypal representation. Jung stated that “the archetypal representations (images and ideas) mediated to us by the unconscious should not be confused with the archetype as such. They are very varied structures which all point to one essentially ‘irrepresentable’ basic form” (Jung, 1969, p. 417). Archetype as such is characterized by certain formal elements and fundamental meanings that can be grasped only approximately. The archetype as such “is a psychoid factor that belongs, as it were, to the invisible, ultra-violet end of the psychic spectrum... the real nature of the archetype is not capable of being made conscious” (Jung, 1969, p. 417). It looks like even in his time there was confusion about the two meanings of the word archetype. Jung explained: “My views about the ‘archaic remnants’, which I call ‘archetypes’ or ‘primordial images,’ have been constantly criticized by people who lack sufficient knowledge of the psychology of dreams and of mythology (Jung, 1990, p. 67) The term archetype is often misunderstood as meaning certain definite mythological images or motifs, “but these are nothing more than conscious representations. Such variable representations cannot be inherited. The archetype *is a tendency to form such representations* of a motif representations that

can vary a great deal in detail without losing their basic pattern” (Jung, 1990, p. 67). For example, the Mother archetype can be represented in millions of forms, yet it still is “the Mother” as such.

In general, Jungian archetypes are defined as universal archaic patterns, symbols, and images. They are elements of unconscious which prefigure and direct conscious thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Yet, it is important to know that whenever we talk about a certain archetype, we are actually talking about the archetypal representation or “Numinous,” because it has become partially conscious. In depth psychology, what happens between unconscious and conscious is called numinous.

Self-integration

In Jungian psychology, the ultimate goal of personal growth (Self-actualization, Self-realization, or Self-integration) is achieved through the process of “Individuation.” Libido is constantly bringing the unknown elements of unconscious, or the “Shadow”, to the surface of ego. The shadow or the dark matter of psyche includes what we hate and deny in ourselves, what we dislike seeing in ourselves, and what is unexperienced, unlearned, and unknown to our us. The easy-to-say and hard-to-do individuation process is about integrating the shadow matter into our ideally aware, flexible, and ever-expanding ego. The whole process is about the integration between the ego and the Self as the core archetype of our unconscious.

Archetypal integration

As the life force or libido brings the unconscious elements to the surface of consciousness the ego, depending on its awareness and experience with the integration process, faces and interacts with them. Archetypal integration is the process of integration of a certain archetype with the ego. When the archetype is suppressed and buried deep in the unconscious, we are possessed by it. This is when the archetype shows its worst face; a complex that keeps us stuck in repetitive patterns. As the archetype emerges from the unconscious, it may be projected onto outer subjects. This helps the ego see the archetypal elements even if it is in an outer mirror. As the ego absorbs the qualities of the archetype it receives its gifts of wisdom. An experienced aware ego is simultaneously flexible and consistent enough to handle the tension between the opposite forces of conscious and unconscious. The integration includes the necessary emergence before the emergence. Individuation through integration is an ever-going process in our psyche.

Centaur; the Archetype

Satyrs seem to be the first elements of the Centaur archetype coming to the surface. They are bestial creatures who are all about violence, rape, and savagery. Centaurs are also animalistic with a lustful licentious behaviour, but in a wicked, immoral, and deceitful way. Centaurus, Nessus, and Eurytus betrayed men’s trust and tried to seduce and rape their wives. Centaurs had little tolerance and an invincible thirst for wine which would unleash their animal side. They get blinded by their instincts and are often defeated because of that. All through the Greek mythology centaurs are killed by humans probably inspired by our wishful thinking that our civil side will conquer our animalistic side. Follis and Chiron were exceptionally self-preserved and wise, yet even they are pictured as warriors.

Chiron mentored many heroes specially Athena’s favorites. These patriarchal heroes

were considered to be strong because of controlling their instincts and emotions. It makes a lot of sense for them to be trained by a centaur; a creature who knows best how powerful, possessive. And out of control the instincts and emotions can get. Chiron gave his life to save Prometheus; the bringer of the fire and knowledge to humanity and the one who initiated the tradition of animal sacrifice. Chiron defeats his animalistic side. He represents hope for the wildest of us. Raised and trained by Apollo, the most sophisticated god of Olympus, Chiron taught each of his students specifically what they needed in their future missions. That certainly reflects his brilliance and talent as a mentor. As skillful he was in hunting and archery, he was well versed in the arts of playing music, prophecy, and medicine. Although he was a prominent healer, he was unable to heal himself. The pain caused by the arrow mistakenly shot at him was so excruciating that he gave up his immortality. This quality reminds us of another archetype; the “Wounded Healer.” Stephen Karpman (1968) introduced the “Drama Triangle” as a model of the codependent interaction between the victim, the prosecutor (abuser), and the rescuer (usually a wounded healer). The wounded healer has been wounded, but has learned to overcome it to a certain degree. Chiron was wounded by being rejected by his parents. The urge to help others and save the victims is almost automatic and instinctual to this character. These are mentors and healers who sell themselves short, are unable to say no to anyone needing help, and prioritize others’ needs over their own. This codependency model traps them in the triangle. Until we find a way out through an emergence, we will be stuck between our two opposites sides that are constantly wounding each other. Victims may not be aware of their abusive side and how their victimhood affects others’ lives. The archetypal representation of Chiron shows a high level of integration between our animalistic and our civilized sides, yet there seems to be more to come.

Beyond the Old Myths

“Archetypes are universal patterns, and myths are the specific cultural carriers of those archetypes, carrying symbolic and psychological truths, not literal truths” (Selig, 2012, p. 169). In 1961, Carl Jung stated that “we no longer have any myth” (as cited in Williams, 2005, p. 1). Thirty years later, Joseph Campbell (1938-1987) said that although older myths have become dysfunctional and there would be no original new myth, yet there would be new personal myths and a brand new global one. “The only mythology that is valid today is the mythology of the planet—and we don’t have such a mythology” (Campbell, 1988, p. 28). Living in a different Zeitgeist (spirit of time) than Jung, Jean Houston (1937-current) joyfully declared that “myth is bursting through at such a rate that even the most ancient and honored of myths themselves are changing” (Houston, 1997, p. 3). In 1850, our Zeitgeist was brilliantly described by Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) as “wandering between two worlds, one dead, the other powerless to be born. To live in the time between the gods which have fled, and the gods which are not yet” (Arnold, as seen in Williams, 2005, p. 1). The question is, should we hold the tension of this liminal time, as depth psychology encourages us and wait for the unconscious to produce new myths? Pete Williams answered: “There is compelling evidence indicating that to passively wait is an unacceptably dangerous position” (Williams, 2005, p. 4). To Williams, Jung’s attitude of patient curiosity is a luxury we cannot afford since “threatening gods [Titans, as he suggested] are now on the move and they are attempting to march into the psychic void of our myth-less collective consciousness” (Williams, 2005, p. 4). However, holding the tension between the opposites is not passive: It is Yin, open, and receptive to both ideas and it can also be a contributing Yang in the final stages of emerging the new.

Liminal is a space-time of tension, of no-thingness, where it has the full potentiality of creating anew. Centaurs are liminal creatures. Liminal beings cannot easily be placed into a single category of existence. As liminal creatures, centaurs stand on thresholds, right in the ambiguous space of in-betweenness. This might be the reason the centaurs are usually pictured emerging from the forest, pausing and standing at the threshold staring at us. Should we wait for these luminous creatures of integrity to once again reappear at the threshold of our consciousness? Before answering that question, we need to think about what they have already brought to our consciousness and if we need more of that in this era of integration.

The Severance

“San peoples tell of a primeval time when animals were people; after an initial creation event, they were differentiated” (Solomon, 1996, P. 46). In the magical world, we animals, humans, plants, rocks, dead, and alive were all one. We were what we hunted and painted the hunt with carbonated plant people on cave rock people. “The belief that animals were once people allows an interpretation of “Therianthropes;” (Solomon, 1996, P. 46) figures both human and animal. Some of the paintings of fantastic creatures may portray beings from the primordial world. “Alternatively, some researchers contend that they depict the shaman’s experience of physical transformation during a trance—when shamans enter the realm of the spirits of the dead” (Solomon, 1996, p. 46). The centaurs emerged in the mythic era right in between the magical and the mental. Ken Wilber (1949-current) who has his own integral theory, a kind of "theory of everything" which suggests living in a totality of matter, body, mind, soul, and spirit, defined what he called the "Centaur Awareness" as “the awareness not of a horseman ruling over his horse, but rather of a centaur, a total, self-governing organism” (Wilber, 1977, p. 118). The centaur is an undivided psycho-somatic being still one with his instinctual senses.

The dualism of the mental mode was a wedge driven deep into the centaur. The body was split from and abandoned by the mind. In mythic consciousness the human head is still connected to the animal body. The real severance happened in the mental mode when the body became the mind’s vehicle and property and the ego’s object. Zeus, the great god of patriarchy, is a head; the head of gods’ assembly, the head of the family, and the ruling head. His head even gives birth to Athena; the female defendant of patriarchy. This is when we entered the mental era of many capital letter Truths, ideas, and beliefs which turn out to be illusions, at least when they are put against another. Losing the body uprooted us from real and objective and deprived us from our tacit way of knowing the world. The centaurs, as the story tellers of human and animal integration, were eventually massacred. The split was the end of human as a whole and from then on centaurs became the reminders of the story of severance. The flesh-less is also life-less. Is “soul,” with all the meanings, symbols, and layered depth of its abstract existence, our invention to substitute the liveliness we lost through the separation from the flesh? The sad centaur nods.

“Very few people lose their minds, but most have already lost their bodies” (Wilber, 1977, p. 253). We were taught that the body housed animalistic disgusting passions, “that it should be hidden from our sight by binding and suffocating clothing, that while the “mind” produced noble ideas, the body produced nothing but “brute” force or “foul” excretions” (p. 246). Our body became something to be ashamed of, something to be used that would eventually rot out from under us. “The whole weight of our social indoctrination is aimed at placing as much distance

between our 'minds' and our 'bodies' as possible... this maneuver inevitably backfires... in exiling our bodies we simultaneously exile all possibility of real joy and happiness" (p. 246). Maybe we should once again awake the body, for "energy is eternal delight...and is from the body" (p. 246).

In our time, human fragmentation through duality has continued to the point in which most individuals don't even feel identified as a whole with all of their organism. Our language is a reflection of this mind-set. "We say 'I have a body' not 'I am a body,' and this 'I' that 'has' a body we call our self, our ego. At this point, man's identity shifts from his organism as a whole to his ego" (Wilber, 2012, p. 116). To have a body, even if it is connected to the body, is different than being the body. As the body, we respond naturally and spontaneously to life. Jung wrote, "Whatever you experience outside of the body, in a dream for instance, is not experienced unless you take it into the body, because the body means the here and now" (Jung, 1997, p. 1316). Instincts and emotions are gates into the body. It is important to know the difference between the mental experience of the body and being the body. To imagine an organ is not really to be the organ. Even to be in the body differs from being the body. The conscious acceptance of having a feeling does not necessarily lead to the ability to express this feeling. It is one thing to feel sad and another to be able to cry and yet another to be the sadness. Ego and body, psyche and soma, unite in the awareness of the total self. "Whereas on the ego level one may receive an undoubtedly beneficial insight about one's repressed anger, on the Existential Level one becomes the anger, one disappears into anger, in the flesh, as body and soul fuse into the now released spontaneity of the centaur" (Wilber, 1977, p. 250).

The Return of the Centaurs

Gebser believed that elements from previous structures of consciousness will return to intensify before integration in the new era. The intensification of opposing elements will create tension. Are centaurs, as elements of the mythical mode, returning to our time to be experienced on an intensified level? Will they create tension by opposing to other forms of their archetypal representations as well as different elements from their era or other epochs of consciousness? Are there any signs of their return and if so, should we just wait to see how they manifest or should we get consciously involved in their creation?

The Jungian concept of archetype is often criticized for being predetermined. This might be the result of the confusion between archetype as such and archetypal representation. While archetype as such is a certain abstract pattern, the representation is ever-changing. Each life experience adds up an element, usually in the form of image, to the representation. As an archetype, the hybrids have been manifested in many forms. There is a long list of the human hybrids with fish, snake, bird, goat, etc.... as well as multiple animals simultaneously. Baku is a Japanese creature with the head of an elephant, the ears of a rhinoceros, the legs of a tiger, the body of a bear, and the tail of a cow. Navagunjara is a Hindu creature composed of nine different animals with the head of a rooster, neck of a peacock, back of a bull, tail as a serpent, three legs of an elephant, tiger and deer or horse, and the fourth limb being a human hand holding a lotus.



Fig. 8. Navagunjara

Centaurs are human-horse hybrids, yet what they truly represent is the integration of the civil side with the somatic. In that sense, the human-robot hybrids might be considered as a return of centaurs. The robotic parts are usually an extension of body parts or senses. Eye glasses, hearing aids, and prosthetic limbs have long been the replacements of lost somatic senses or limbs while the future combines are to expand our abilities beyond our natural somatic capacities. Future eyes will see miles further with adaptability to zoom into a much more detailed accuracy. Our new ears will hear a wider range of frequencies. The Blade Runners are dashing on a speed times more than our fastest athletes' records. The term "Cyborg", a contraction of "Cybernetic Organism," was coined in 1960 by Manfred Clynes (1942- 2020) and Nathan S. Kline (1916-1983). A cyborg is a being with both organic and biomechatronic body parts. It looks like we are more willing to think of humans as machines than as animals. While cyborgs are commonly thought of as human hybrids, they might also conceivably be any kind of organism. This will open up a new field not only in the mergence between humans and cyber robots, but also as an integration between the two fields of mind and matter.

Although these new hybrids might represent a new intensified level of integration, they might not be necessarily the only archetypal representations or the best. We can add to the archetypal manifestations and create new myths consciously. Chiron seems to manifest a high level of integration, yet we can go further beyond him archetypally.

Somatic Re-memembering. The severance from the body has happened. The act of severance itself is already remembered, even if unconsciously, yet we have to re-member and re-integrate our body on a deeper level with our civil mind. The first sin, might have also been the severance from the body and the fall from the heaven of unity. That means our main task in life is to re-member our body into the state of unity. To the civilized human, the somatic experience of centaur awareness is not an easy step to take in consciousness. "For some, this single step appears a giant leap across an unfathomable abyss." (Wilber, 1977, p. 118) Coming to the centaur awareness means coming to our senses, literally. "As long as the body remains as object to the

ego, it may fulfill the ego's pride, but it will never provide the joy and satisfaction that the 'alive' body offers." (Lowen, as cited in Wilber, 1977, p. 250). The severance has deprived us from the somatic wisdom. If we were not disconnected from this wisdom, we would not need to decide what to eat by reading about the nutrition. Our body would tell us when and what to eat like it used to centuries ago. The intensification of the somatic connection may take us to a new level of integration. We may learn, collectively, what monks and martial artists have done through out centuries to control the heartbeat, metabolism, and body temperature. Studies on Wim Hoff (1959-current), the modern Ice Man, shows that he and his trainees are able to stay in iced water for hours, climb mountains in winter wearing shorts, and resist the direct injection of bacterial poison because of their incredible autoimmunity. If we integrate somatic connection with the mental knowledge of our gut bacteria, we may develop a new agency over our mental and physical status. Instincts carry generational wisdom. Our instincts are great guides we rarely experience or trust anymore. Through these new intensified somatic connections, we may emerge as the new superhumans. Unlike cyborgs that gain their superpowers from technologic improvement of senses, these super-centaurs will be the emergent from body/mind integration.

New Mentorship. Chiron has a talent for teaching his students what they need individually. Integration with Chiron on this level may lead us to a more individualistic education system. The Mentor-student relationship has been greatly damaged by our current access to information. All through the history of education, those who taught us were highly respected not merely because of their information, but also for the masterful knowledge obtained by life time experiences and the wisdom resulted by that. A modern instructor is not necessarily a wise mentor. We can hardly respect someone as a mentor when she can easily be replaced by an online search. We may need to integrate with a deeper level of mentor archetype to regain an interpersonal space of respect between teachers and students.

Healing the Wounded Healer. Chiron helped heroes who suppressed their emotions and initiated animal sacrifice. Unlike them we want to reconnect with emotions as powerful elements of our psyche. Emotions and feelings are messengers of the psyche and leaders to greater balance, harmony, and thus the wisdom of well-being. As a wounded healer, Chiron was unable to heal himself. Wounded healers are trapped in the same triangle along with victims and abusers. Obtaining emotional literacy through a deeper level of connection may contribute to bringing health to the current un-well medical system before it takes real care of patients.

Perception of Time. Chiron was the son of Chronos, the god of time. Developing Chiron as an archetype may contribute to a higher and more wholistic perception of time and our release from the linear time. The circular time is related to the sun and the moon, the seasons, and circles in nature. The circular time might be seen as a bending of linear time, but temporality dissolves it. The eruption of time and the rule of linear time have played a major role in severance from the body. Young children are dragged from bed to kindergartens early in the morning when they need to sleep. People eat at their lunch break whether they are hungry or not. There is a time to do everything no matter what the body really needs. The invasion and disrespect to the somatic time is causing disease. Centaurs might as well bring healing to this aspect of modern lives.

The Liminal luminosity. Centaurs are once again emerging from the forest of the

unknown, pausing at the threshold of our consciousness, and gazing at us. These liminal creatures may be able to heal, rebuild, and redefine our relationship with the unconscious. These luminous creatures may lead us to the bright pastures of diaphany. The history of centaur art, with the massacre scenes, is a testimony to our obsessive effort to kill our animalistic side. For centuries, we tried separating ourselves from the Earth to reach heavens. We tried to drop the flesh and fly. Centaurs tell us that our road to redemption may be through the flesh after all.

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