



Book Reviews

Downes, Paul (2012). *The Primordial Dance: Diametric and Concentric Spaces in the Unconscious World*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Peter Lang

Spatial-Phenomenology and the Fundamental Experience in "The Primordial Dance: Diametric and Concentric Spaces in the Unconscious World"

Mariane Lima de Souza*^a

[a] Departamento de Psicologia Social e do Desenvolvimento, Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo, Vitória, Brazil.

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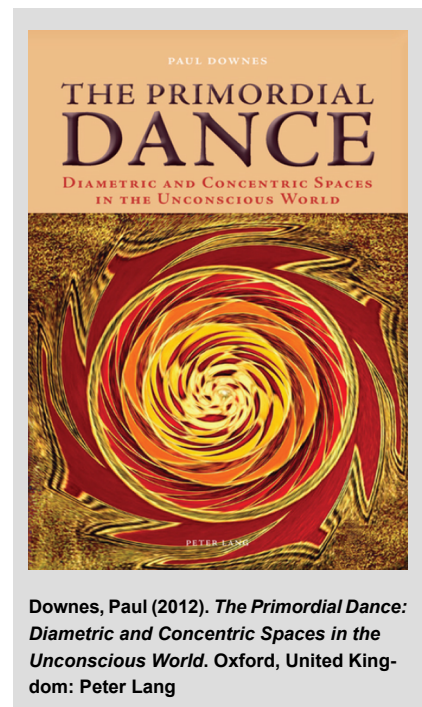
*Corresponding author at: Departamento de Psicologia Social e do Desenvolvimento, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Psicologia, Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo, Av. Fernando Ferrari, 514, 29075-910 Vitória ES, Brazil. E-mail: limadesouza@gmail.com



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Consciousness, the subject matter for both early scientific psychology and phenomenology, is now the central focus of interdisciplinary research programs. This renewed interest of researchers on consciousness has been produced a lot of findings about consciousness processes and its limits. For example, neuroscience research on the limits of conscious perception provides new and interesting evidence for the non-conscious processes and the large influence of it in our daily life (Berlin, 2011). In fact, the increased interest in non-conscious processes led to a rediscovering of unconscious, now called by cognitive scientists “the new unconscious” (Hassin, Uleman, & Bargh, 2005), in order to differentiate it from psychoanalytic conceptions. However, the central question remains opened: what is consciousness and what is the unconscious? Possibly, we are a little more close to the answer, but there is no doubt all knowledge produced about unconscious in the interpretative scientific approach has to be taken into account if we intend to advance towards a more complete view of the phenomenon.

The book *The Primordial Dance: Diametric and Concentric Spaces in the Unconscious World* written by Paul Downes (2012) is an effort to draw on those fundamental issues, including a deconstruction of the cognitivist new unconscious. It provides a wide view of a primordial unconscious dimension as a spatial-phenomenological structure. Beyond describing, his text uncovers the primordial intertwining between concentric and diametric



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spaces as a priori structure projected into unconscious. Facing the challenge of the truth search for primordality without fall into the trap “of the Scylla of a hegemonic universalism and the Charybdis of a flat relativism” (p. 11), Downes ranges from Gilligan’s ethic of care to Freudian repression, and from modernist art and the yin/yang archetypal structure to Derrida’s deconstruction of the western subject and Jungian psychology. As a result of an interesting contrast between the early Heidegger’s transcendental project and Derrida’s deconstruction, the author proposes a reconstruction of primordality as a spatial structure prior to traditional conceptions of subjectivity.

The book is divided in four parts. The first one (Setting the Stage for the Primordial Dance) elucidates the main concepts underlying the truth search for primordality: concentric and diametric space, primordality, a spatial-phenomenology, dynamic and a priori structures. In a broad sense, concentric and diametric are defined as primordial spatial dimensions that interact with each other. The outcome of this spatial interaction is a dynamic and a priori structure that is projected into experience. In the second part (Spatial-Phenomenology: Interpersonal and Intrapsychic Dimensions) Downes focuses on a spatial-phenomenological reinterpretation of the relational subject in Gilligan’s ethic of care, the psychoanalytic subject in Freudian repression, the early childhood experience and the psychosis. The third part (Spatial-Phenomenology as a discourse Prior to Language and Myth through a Collective Spatial Unconscious) presents the possibility of transcending individual subjectivity and uncover a primordial discourse prior to language with examples from modernist art and the yin/yang archetypal structure, as well as with the proposal of a phenomenology of concentric and diametric space as lived experiential content. The last part (Primordial Structures Prior to subjectivity: Projections of a Dynamic A priori Structure) relies on Heidegger’s Dasein and analyses the possibility of a space prior to subjectivity as cognition and pure reason.

The Primordial Dance is not an easy reading, but the interesting arguments catch our attention and leave us curious about the further issues. Besides, the author carefully summarizes the main idea in almost each chapter either in a paragraph named “Argument”, or in an illustrative table with principal topics discussed. Figures reproduced along the text also help and guide the reader throughout the detailed and complex author’s reasoning. Downes’ work has also that special characteristic of a phenomenological approach emphasized by Merleau-Ponty (1962), when advised us that the true cogito does not replace the world itself by the world as meaning. In other terms, in Downes’ view primordality is examined as “conditions of possibility framing experience and understanding” (p. 11) and must not exclude another possible truths.

The author. Paul Downes is the Coordinator of Educational Disadvantage Centre & Senior Lecturer in Psychology at St Patrick’s College, Dublin City University. He obtained his Ph.D., Psychology, and Law degrees from Trinity College Dublin and received a number of academic awards there, including the Butterworth (Ireland) Prize for Law, the Graduate Memorial Prize for Psychology, and is a TCD scholar of Law through the TCD Foundation Scholarship Exam (1990). He has also been a Visiting Lecturer at Warsaw University, Charles University Prague, University of Ljubljana, University of Pristina and a Visiting Research Fellow, University of Cambridge, England, Lauterpacht Centre for International Law. His is also a Thematic Expert Advisor to EU URBACT initiative, PREVENT project, for its 10 city research project on early school leaving and family support (2012-2014).

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