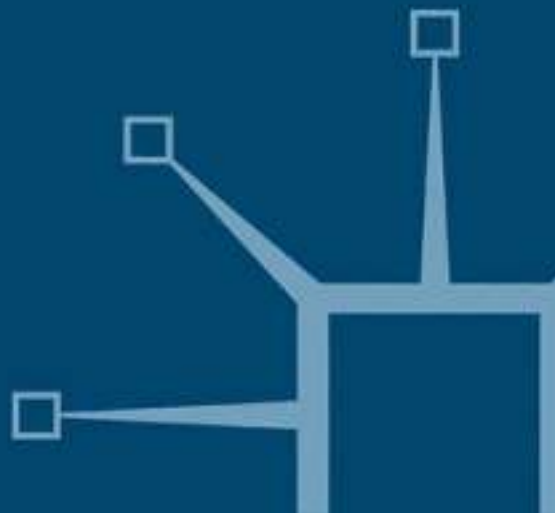


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The Theology and Philosophy of Eliade

A Search for the Centre

Carl Olson



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A Search for the Centre

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This work is dedicated to the memory of Hy and his wonderful sense of humour and to Lucy for introducing me to books.

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Preface

Previously-published books on the contributions of Mircea Eliade to the history of religions have tended to emphasize his methodology. Although the present work shares this methodological concern, its focus is much wider and tries to indicate the many facets and implications of Eliade's scholarship as a historian of religions. In other words, the intention is to view Eliade from a variety of perspectives. The overall purpose of this study is to look at his work as a historian of religions, a theologian, a philosopher, a novelist, and as someone engaged in cross-cultural dialogue. In a few of the chapters, we will place Eliade within his historical context with relation to the possibility of a science of religion and his theory of myth. Those familiar with the works of Eliade might find the subtitle of this manuscript a little odd. It is my contention that one cannot separate the scholarly work of Eliade from his own personal quest for meaning in life. Not only does the symbolism of the centre play an important role in his scholarly studies, it also assumes a personal existential importance for his own quest for a centre of existence. Thus Eliade's scholarship can be interpreted as both an attempt to understand religious phenomena and as a personal pilgrimage to the meaningful centre of existence, a theme that runs throughout his works and one that concludes this book.

After a brief review of Eliade's life and examples of the types of criticisms levelled against him, he is set within the context of the development of *Religionswissenschaft* in order to clarify the distinction between *Geisteswissenschaft* from *Naturwissenschaft* and to reexamine the possibility of a science of religion in Eliade's works and in the scholarly study of religion in general. Besides briefly reviewing some criticisms of Eliade's method for its alleged lack of scientific rigour, the second chapter will show that Eliade's critics embrace a positivistic model of science that is fallacious when compared to some contemporary philosophers of science and what they perceive to be the actual way the scientific method is practised. By reviewing Eliade's own comprehension of science and its relationship to his scholarly discipline, we will discover that he comprehends his discipline as *Geisteswissenschaft* and not *Naturwissenschaft* and that religious phenomena themselves demand an imaginative and intuitive approach.

Since the problem of hermeneutics is central to Eliade's work, most critics have focused their attention on the shortcomings of his approach, but few have considered the fore-structure of his hermeneutics. Rather than systematically explaining his hermeneutics, the third chapter will take a cue

from Gadamer and look at the presuppositions, pre-understanding, and anticipations that Eliade brings with him to his interpretative task. We will discuss sacred language, the unity of his method, situation and horizon and his call for a total hermeneutics. With its methodological unity grounded in human consciousness, the historian of religions is not limited by higher historicity. Not only are past religious phenomena and events potentially contemporary for the interpreter, one can also become aware of other situations through the myths, symbols and rites of another religious culture that disclose the boundary situations of *homo religiosus*. Eliade conceives of total hermeneutics as reaching beyond simply interpreting and understanding religious facts to thinking about them. Thus total hermeneutics stimulates philosophical thought, and presupposes that this will lead to a change in human beings and be a source for new cultural values. While considering his hermeneutics, we will also compare aspects of his position with that of Jacques Derrida, the postmodernist, deconstructionist:

If Chapters 2 and 3 are more concerned with the work of Eliade as a historian of religions, Chapter 4 will examine the theological aspects of his work. After our examination of the fallenness of the human situation and his understanding of God, we will discover that the key to understanding Eliade's theological reflections is the role of nostalgia. This will necessitate a discussion of what Eliade calls cosmic Christianity, a natural religion sanctified by the evidence of Jesus that is in tune with cosmic rhythms and bereft of dogmatic teachings and history. Cosmic Christianity is pervaded by an aura of nostalgia, which Eliade conceives as a vision of rebirth, resacralization and re-mythologization of contemporary culture. Throughout the discussion of his theology, we will compare Eliade's position with that of Mark C. Taylor, a deconstructionist of Christian theology, and the latter's development of a postmodern atheology.

From the theological aspects of Eliade's work, we move to his participation in and contribution to cross-cultural dialogue. This chapter tends to overlap with that on the fore-structure of his hermeneutics. According to Eliade, the history of religions paves the way for religious ecumenism between religions that are still alive and those long dead because it embodies an ecumenical and dialogical spirit. For members of Western culture, intercultural dialogue possesses certain benefits: it avoids sterile provincialism; enhances self-understanding; enriches one's consciousness; obliges one to delve into the history of the human spirit; and stimulates philosophical thinking. For Eliade, hermeneutics is the means by which to begin dialogue. We will compare Eliade's conception of dialogue with that of John Kristeva, a postmodernist with a psycho-linguistic philo-

science approach, and the later two volumes work of Jürgen Habermas on communication.

The sixth chapter, on Eliade's theory of myth, will complement the chapters on hermeneutics and his theology. By considering the sociological nature of myth, it will be possible to understand in what ways it saves modern beings by overcoming doubts, stimulating human initiative and creativity, modifying and liberating beings from desecration and demystification. This chapter will serve as a complement to Chapter 3 on the fore-structure of his hermeneutics. We will also compare Eliade's position to that of Derrida, Kristeva, and Eric Gould, a deconstructive literary critic, with respect to sign, symbol and myth.

Since myth and symbols reveal Being, it is necessary to consider Eliade's theory of archaic ontology. Like the heroic Parsifa, of the Holy Grail legend, contemporary beings must ask the ontological question, an inquiry that is intermingled with the curious and intriguing. Before one can find one's way to one's spiritual destiny, one must ask the pertinent ontological question, because there is nothing prior to this profound question and ontology is equivalent to religion. Eliade conceives this aspect of his work as philosophical in nature. By trying to grasp Eliade's answer to the ontological question, we will try to determine his response to several questions: What are the two basic modes of being? What is the ontology of religious language? What is the place of ontology in rites or initiation? What is the relationship between being and non-being? What are the implications of Eliade's archaic ontology? Is he imposing his own ontology upon his material or is it derived from the religious phenomena that he investigates? Within certain limits, we will apply a kind of validity test to his theory of archaic ontology by comparing his theory to the world-views of some Native American Indians and African tribes. We will also compare Eliade's archaic ontology with the ontological stance of Derrida.

After a discussion of his theory of archaic ontology, we will consider the concept of power in Eliade's works by comparing his theory with that offered by Gerardus van der Leeuw, the Dutch historian of religion, and Michel Foucault, a postmodern historian, by considering the following: the nature of power; power, space and time; power, symbol and myth, and possessors of power. We will demonstrate that the concept of power is the central organizing principle for van der Leeuw and Foucault, whereas the distinction between the sacred and profane is the organizing principle for Eliade. We will conclude by offering some personal reflections on power.

In the ninth chapter, we will examine Eliade's views on time from the perspectives of his roles as both a historian of religions and a literary figure.

We will compare Eliade's view of time with those of Augustine, Hegel and Foucault in order to highlight the peculiarities of Eliade's position. After reviewing Eliade's comprehension of two kinds of time and its implications for *homo religiosus* of archaic cultures and modern beings, we will discuss what he means by the terror of history, the response to the terror of history in the form of an abolition of time by means of an eternal return to a primordial history embodied in myth, and the relationship between time and nostalgia. By considering this final element of his theory of time, we will be able to complement Eliade's views on cosmic Christianity in Chapter 4.

I want to thank my colleague Jim Sheridan for his critical comments and suggestions for revisions. Conversations with my other colleagues have stimulated me, and their friendship nurtured this work. I also want to thank Provost Andy Fowl and President Daniel Sullivan of Allegheny College for encouraging an environment of intellectual inquiry.

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I want to thank the editors of *Nomos* for permission to reprint an article entitled 'Theology of Nostalgia: Reflections on the Theological Aspects of Eliade's Work,' Vol. XXVI, Just. 1 that appears in this book in an expanded form as Chapter 4. And appreciation also goes to the editors of *Studia Theologica* for permission to reprint an article entitled 'The Concept of Power in the Works of Eliade and van der Leeuw' that appeared in Volume 42 in 1988 and is expanded in the present text as Chapter 8.

1 Introduction

Among the many sub-disciplines under the broad umbrella of Religious Studies is the history of religions. This relatively recent sub-discipline is commonly associated with such religious theorists as C. J. Bleeker, W. Brede Kristensen, Raffaele Pettazzini, Gerardus van der Leeuw, Geo Widengren and Mircea Eliade. Although a particular historian of religions may be an expert in a single religious tradition, his/her scope is usually much wider and comparative in nature. The most recent grand theorist within the history of religions is Eliade. Because Eliade covers a very broad scope for the history of religions that includes philosophical and theological implications, his basic methodology and goals raise a series of questions. Does he understand his discipline as a science? How does he interpret religious phenomena? Even more fundamentally, what kinds of presuppositions does he bring to the hermeneutical task? What type of theology emerges from his work? What are some of the philosophical biases and implications of his contributions? If his method possesses a major comparative component, does this render feasible a dialogue between different religious traditions? In order to respond to these questions and others, it is necessary to view Eliade more than simply as a historian of religions. We must view him also as a theologian, philosopher and novelist in order to obtain a more complete view of his contributions to the study of religion. This study intends to be more multi-dimensional than other works on Eliade, and to take into consideration the more personal aspect of Eliade's work in the form of an interior pilgrimage to find the centre of human existence. In other words, Eliade's various works need to be viewed as his own personal quest for meaning. Thus his many contributions to the study of religion are more than dry, objective, descriptive and interpretative analysis of the religious phenomena that he encounters in his works. In order to comprehend the personal aspect of his work and quest, we need first to review his life: his search for a centre of existence is discussed in a final chapter.

REVIEW OF ELIADE'S LIFE

The life of Mircea Eliade resembles in many ways an odyssey through a labyrinth. He was born in Bucharest on 9 March 1907, the second of three children. His father was an army officer and never rose above the rank of

captain. The young Eliade thought that he was different from his classmates, that he was predestined to be on the edge of society and that he would have to discover a new path for himself. As a young student, he studied various scientific subjects and was an active writer, using his attic bedroom as his base of literary activity and place of solitude. He relates in his autobiography the celebration of the appearance of his one-hundredth article in 1925 with some friends. He admits that he could not be integrated into his culture and moulded by prevailing patterns. Through his mentor Nae Ionescu, Eliade became a salaried writer for the newspaper *Curierul* (The Worker) in 1926 for which he wrote essays of opinion, book reviews and informative articles on various topics and people. Eliade claims that as his cultural horizon grew he became open to foreign adventures.²

After completing his philosophy degree with a thesis on Pico della Mirandola, Campanella and Giordano Bruno, Eliade set out on an adventure to India in 1928 to study with Surendranath Dasgupta, a renowned scholar of Indian philosophy, at the University of Calcutta supported by a scholarship from the Marjanajit Manmohan Chandra Nandy of Kasimbazar. Although it had its roots in his philosophical studies in Rome, Eliade's work in India was an attempt to satisfy his "passion for transcendence, mysticism, and Oriental spirituality".³ After a romantic interlude with a member of Dasgupta's household and ejection from the home by his mentor, Eliade took up residence in an ashram at Rishikesh and practised yoga for six months with Swami Sivananda. After completing his doctoral thesis on yogic techniques, he returned to Rumania to serve in the military in order to satisfy his mandatory one-year commitment. In 1933, he gained critical and popular success with the publication of *Maitreyi*, a literary reworking of his romantic involvement in India for which he won the Tekirghiol-Litorea prize sponsored by the state publishing house, Cultura Nationala, for the best novel by a young writer.

During the 1930s, Eliade also published other works of fiction. His first published novel was *Isabel si apele diavolului* (Isabel and the Devil's Water, 1930). Using the Joycean stream-of-consciousness technique, Eliade wrote *Lumina ce se vinde* (The Light that is Being, 1934), and a so-called indirect novel entitled *Sartor* (1935) that consists of unrelated passages from his Indian journal. Other works related to his Indian experiences were *Soilegii* (Soliloquies, 1932), a small volume of personal philosophy, and his doctoral dissertation on yoga published in French in 1936 under the title *Yoga. Essai sur les origines de la mystique indienne*. Eliade also composed two novels about the younger generation: *Intararea din Rai* (The Return from Paradise, 1933) and its sequel *Huligani* (The Hooligans, 1935). Two fantastic novels appeared in 1937: *Domitrua a Cerului*, a story about a

female *strigoi* (an anonymous ghost figure with an insatiable thirst for blood in order to survive), and *Sarpele* (The Snake), a work that involved Eliade in a pornography scandal and prompted authorities to dismiss him from his university teaching position until his case was finally dismissed by a new Minister of Education. A play entitled *Iphigenia* was published in 1939 and finally staged when Eliade was out of the country. Besides his doctoral dissertation on yoga, the appearance of an article entitled 'Cosmical Homology and Yoga' published in the *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art* in 1957 marked an important point in Eliade's development as an historian of religions because he begins to use the terms sacred and profane in a systematic manner to represent the concrete and real in the case of the former and indicating that the profane represents the insignificant, illusory, and relative. Other themes discussed in this article that have importance for Eliade's later work are chaos, cosmos, and archaic symbolism.

After receiving his doctoral degree, Eliade began his teaching career as an assistant to Nae Ionescu, a professor of logic and metaphysics and ideological leader of the Legion of the Archangel Michael (popularly known as the Iron Guard). Acknowledging the growing popularity of the movement in pre-Second World War Rumania, Eliade did not perceive anything sinister about the movement, but rather perceived it as more of a mystical sect than a political movement due to its structure and vocation.⁵ Eliade's close association with Ionescu and personal friends in the Iron Guard caused him some personal problems because his apartment was searched in 1938 for incriminating evidence by the authorities. Even though no compromising material was found in Eliade's apartment, he was taken into custody on 24 July and sent to a Rumanian concentration camp for his refusal to denounce the Iron Guard, and he continued to refuse to recant his association with the group or its members during his incarceration; he claimed to be a non-political person and thought that it would be absurd for him to dissociate himself from a movement when he did not believe in the political destiny of his generation.⁶

Due to his newspaper writings and his choice of associates, it is easy to comprehend why the Rumanian authorities would view Eliade with, at least, suspicion and conclude that he was a member of the Iron Guard. In his political writings, Eliade expressed an ambivalent attitude because he criticized Marxism, Fascism, and Democracy for being foreign ideologies unsuitable for Rumania, and yet writes favourably of Mussolini, the Italian Fascist leader.⁷ He also enthusiastically supported the Iron Guard movement in his periodical compositions, and criticized democratic ideals because of their tendency towards secularization of the absolute, the destruction of

individualism by its egalitarian tendency, and its potential to lead in its extreme forms to creations like Communism. In other essays, Eliade applauded pacifism, espoused non-political social involvement because of the social divisions caused by partisan politics, and indicated that politics compromised spiritual values and one's freedom.³ The periodical essays in which Eliade's political ideas appear indicates an inconsistent position, although his political conservatism remains constant.

Even before his incarceration, Eliade knew that he would not obtain a position at a university ever again and would be unable to write and publish under the yoke of a dictatorship.⁴ What is curious about this episode in Eliade's life, if we take into consideration that the Iron Guard became associated in historical consciousness with terrorism and pro-Naziism, is that he does not admit that he was a member of the movement, even though close friends were members and he was considered to be a member by the national authorities at the time. In his *Autobiography* he does want his reader to believe that he was a non-political person with friends closely associated with the Iron Guard and that it was a benign, patriotic movement that advocated non-violence. He does not tell us directly that he was or was not a member of the movement. In fact, he seems to hint that he was not a full member of the Iron Guard, even though he might have been sympathetic to some of its ideals. Moreover, he is critical of the Legionaries in his *Autobiography* when some of its members resorted to acts of violence.

Eliade's association, either directly or indirectly, with the Iron Guard continued to cause him trouble after the war. Ernesto de Martino, a translator of Eliade's work *Techniques de Yoga*, received several denunciations concerning the author's alleged fascist activity before the war. Eliade surmises in his *Autobiography* that the allegations originated with the Rumanian legion, and he acknowledges that the denunciations functioned to remind him that his 'imprudent acts and errors committed in youth constituted a series of melencolias that would follow me all my life.'⁵ Eliade proved to have a prophetic vision because a more recent accuser, namely Ivan Strenski, thinks that Eliade's scholarly work is tainted by his former fascist associations.⁶ Should Eliade be condemned for his involvement with the Iron Guard whether or not he was a member of the movement? Should he be criticized for associating with others closely associated with the movement? Should he be censured for the violent activities of others? Although he is not entirely clear in his *Autobiography* about his status in the Iron Guard, he does say that he was a non-political person and that he made some errors when a young man. It is a pernicious characteristic of some academics to be unforgiving for someone who did not have the correct ideology throughout his/her life. Even if Eliade was a

hard-core Fascist throughout his life, for which I have not found any evidence, this political ideology did not affect his scholarship to any sinister extent, and it is unjust to mint someone and to judge them guilty by association. How can we come to grips with Eliade's pre-war association with the Iron Guard? Before and after the war, it can be concluded, by reading his *Autobiography*, that he was a patriot and a Romanian nationalist concerned with his nation's historical past, present dictatorial bondage, and uncertain future; he was also concerned with preserving its culture during its period of diaspora for its artists and intellectuals after the Second World War. Eliade's patriotic fervour is evident in his notion of 'Romanianism', a non-political nationalism that embodied a messianic sense of the divinely-chosen nature of the Romanian nation with a special mission to fulfill in the world.¹

After his release from the sanatorium of Moroeni where he was taken to recover from an illness contracted while incarcerated in the concentration camp for political dissidents, he returned to his wife, Ninu Mareş, and private life until he was appointed cultural attaché to the Romanian legation in London during the Second World War. With the severing of diplomatic relations between England and Rumania, Eliade was appointed cultural adviser to the Rumanian legation in Lisbon in 1941 where he stayed until September 1945. His exile from Rumania 'possessed the value of an initiation'.² Besides the hardships caused by the war and exile from his homeland, Eliade lost his wife who died of cancer on the morning of 20 November 1944. Eliade recalled spending the night by her bedside reading from the Gospel of John and being consoled when she died that she would no longer suffer.³ After the death of his wife, Eliade was invited by Georges Dumézil to teach at the *École des Hautes Études* in Paris in 1945.

During the 1940s, Eliade published a number of works including two fantastic novellas in 1940: *Secretul doctorului Hrnghberger* (The Secret of Dr Hrnghberger) and *Noaptea la Serampore* (Nights at Serampore). The first novella revolves around the mysterious disappearance of a German doctor who practises yoga. The second work is located in India where the characters are transported back in time 1500 years to witness a tragic event. Another novella appeared in 1942 entitled *Un om mare* (A Great Man), while a history of the Romanian people appeared in 1943 entitled *Oi Români, Latini de oriente* (The Romanians, Latins of the East). Other works more directly related to the history of religions began to appear in 1942-43: *Comentarii la legenda Maşterului Manole* (Commentary on the Legend of Master Manole), *Insula lui Cuthonsior*, includes some essays on symbolism, a major contribution to the history of religions entitled *Traité d'histoire des religions*, *Myth reintegrat* (The Myth of Reintegration), a collection

of thirteen articles on symbolism, and his major work on his conception of history *La Mythe de l'éternel retour: Archétypes et répétition* (The Myth of the Eternal Return; Archetypes and Repetition). Although some of his earlier novels were translated into French, they were not very successful either with the critics or the public. The latter part of the decade was a time of considerable poverty for Eliade, who had been deleted from the government payroll and could not return to his homeland because of the unfavourable political climate, but he was able to find some happiness after meeting Christiane Cotescu; they were eventually married in January 1950 before Eliade travelled to Italy to lecture at the University of Rome.

During the summer of 1950, Eliade participated in his first Franco-Conference at Ascona, Switzerland. The shadow of poverty continued to follow Eliade and his new wife, however, and forced them to borrow money from friends in order to survive. Finally, on 9 December 1950, every scholar's dream came true when Eliade received a grant from the Bollinger Foundation of New York for three years which would pay him a monthly stipend of two hundred dollars, enabling him to feel delivered from the nightmare of poverty.²

The 1950s marked a change of venue for Eliade from Europe to America. After having given the Haskell Lectures at the University of Chicago on initiation patterns in 1956, and accepting a position as a visiting professor for the 1956–57 academic year, Eliade accepted a permanent position at Chicago in 1957. Additional important works appeared during this decade: *Shamanism; Images and Symbols; Yoga: Immortality and Freedom; The Forge and the Crucible; The Sacred and the Profane*; and the novel *Forêt interdite* (The Forbidden Forest). Besides the publication of his many books and articles, Eliade's career reached a milestone when he was awarded the title of Sewall L. Avery Distinguished Service Professor by the University of Chicago in 1962.

But before this award was granted, Eliade suffered an acute attack of rheumatoid arthritis in 1960 which was to afflict him until his death from a stroke on 22 April 1986. Even though he reported having to take six Aspirin tablets daily for the sometimes unbearable pain, his health problems did not hinder his scholarly productivity: he assumed the role of a heroic scholarly figure. Academic institutions around the world recognized his many contributions to scholarship by awarding him honorary degrees. He continued to teach until his retirement in 1983. Eliade crowned his productive career with his three-volume *A History of Religious Ideas* and as chief editor of the multi-volume *Encyclopedia of Religion*. Overall, Eliade's life was dedicated to scholarly and literary pursuits.

Eliade's personal odyssey was not only an exterior journey, it was also an interior voyage. He interpreted his own life as a paradox: an attempt to live in history and beyond it; to be involved in current events yet withdrawn from them; to be a Romanian and live in a foreign land; to be a literary figure and scholar of religions; to be a representative of a particular national culture and yet be a member of a universal race of beings.¹ Thus he thought that he lived the conjunction of opposites in an existential way. The conjunction of opposites, however, forms a unity. It is this union or centre that Eliade sought throughout his exterior journey and his interior scholarly and creative pilgrimage. The lifelong search for a centre is the ever-arching theme of this book which will be tied together in the concluding chapter.

Taking into consideration these many paradoxes, Eliade's life and work can be viewed as an attempted synthesis which he discovered in the unitary world of culture that was ultimately a return to nature.² As we will notice in the subsequent chapters, Eliade interpreted modern Western culture as a-religious, suffering from alienation, desecralization and demythologization. In one sense, Eliade wanted to reintroduce religious mystery into modern human life. This implies that much of his work was soteriological. In order to achieve his goal of alleviating modern alienation, Eliade returned to religious history for a remedy. The search for meaning and new modes of being in the historical past was a religious experience because the historian of religions must relive the experiences of past cultures.³ By following this procedure, Eliade wanted to reintroduce religious mystery into the lives of contemporary humans lost in the destructive labyrinth of the twentieth century.

EELIADE'S CRITICS

Eliade's ambitious programme for the history of religions has stirred considerable criticism and given birth to much misunderstanding. His theoretical contributions and methodology have provoked often virulent, vicious and scurrilous attacks by those within the history of religions, anthropologists, theology and even feminists. The criticisms of anthropologists are, for instance, often of a general methodological nature and also of a more particular kind. After chiding Eliade for his anthropological naivete, Dorothy Little asserts that an additional difficulty is 'Eliade's apparent assumption of social evolution'. Although in one of his summary statements he remarks that one cannot really sketch an evolutionary development where one pat-

tern of initiation rites gives place to another, the book as a whole does seem to reflect this attitude.¹⁹ Lessa, commenting on another work by Eliade, categorizes his general approach as "Frazerian",²⁰ a point also made by Edmund Leach, who furthermore claims that Eliade is an armchair scholar.²¹ Considering Eliade's attempt to interpret the significance of the New Year ceremonies among several religious cultures, Wallace finds that his hermeneutic is invented and mystical.²² Another anthropologist criticizes his theory of initiation as speculative.²³ A work by Saliba summarizes the criticisms of anthropologists and adds some newer ones: the omission of Islam and Chinese religious traditions from his work; the lack of guiding principle in the selection of data; and the accusation that Eliade selects his facts and omits data that negate his generalizations; that Eliade compares outward manifestations and not meanings; that the claim that Eliade's work is scientific and empirical cannot be substantiated by concrete evidence; that Eliade does not distinguish between primary and secondary sources and does not evaluate his sources; and that his work on non-literate cultures is flawed because he applies Western concepts to them.²⁴

Not only is Eliade called a Frazerian by some scholars, sometimes he is called a Jungian or too much emphasis is placed on Jung's influence upon his work.²⁵ After indicating some of the similarities between Eliade and Jung, Ricketts asserts that similarities do not prove that Eliade is dependent upon Jung.²⁶ Ricketts proceeds to demonstrate some of the differences between Jung and Eliade when he states, for instance, that Eliade does not use the term archetype in the same way as Jung to refer to the archetypes of the collective unconscious, even though Eliade's failure to distinguish his use of the term archetype from that of Jung introduces some confusion into his work.²⁷ In Eliade's later works, the acceptance of Jungianism ends with the rejection of psychology for its reductionism.

Within the field of the history of religions, most of the criticism tends to focus on Eliade's methodology. Jonathan Z. Smith criticizes Eliade's use of morphology and comparison. According to Smith, morphology, a logical arrangement of particular items organized into a complex whole, assumes an *a priori* "fitting economy",²⁸ which ignores the categories of space and time.²⁹ It thus excludes the historical (a criticism made also by other scholars). The process of comparing data is also non-historical.³⁰ Rather than a method for inquiry, comparison is, according to Smith, a matter of memory and impression.³¹ In a more recent work, Smith calls into question again Eliade's comparative method:

Comparison requires the acceptance of difference as the grounds of its being interesting, and a methodical manipulation of that difference to

achieve some stated cognitive end. The questions of comparison are questions of judgment with respect to differences: What differences are to be maintained in the interests of comparative inquiry?¹⁴

Smith's comments suggest that he is interested in differences between religious phenomena, whereas Eliade is overly concerned with sameness to the extent of being blind to their differences. In contrast to Smith's position, Jean Caliana perceives part of the reason for confusion with regard to Eliade's work to be due to his lack of obsession with methodology.¹⁵ In his work devoted to Eliade's hermeneutics, Marino thinks that comparison aids the integration of phenomena within the same class or category, an operation that guarantees the validity of Eliade's interpretation.¹⁶ With regard to morphological classification, Marino asserts that it is non-diachronic and agrees with Smith that its synchronic character involves an atemporal nature and adds that it originates in phenomenology.¹⁷

Besides Smith's criticism of Eliade's use of morphological classification and comparison for being non-historical, Ninian Smart also reproaches Eliade for his ahistorical approach by concentrating on archetypes, which devalues historical consciousness.¹⁸ According to a more positive assessment by Marino, archetypes play both an original foundational role and a heuristic role as a paradigmatic hermeneutic instrument. Archetypes have a genetic sense of *armanum a priori* and serve as dynamic and exemplars.¹⁹ Marino proceeds to argue that the hermeneutic value of the ideal archetype springs from the evidence: its paradigmatic function defines the supreme criteria of an interpretation.²⁰ On the other hand, Caliana perceives an archetype as an operational category with heuristic value that liberates itself from historical reality.²¹

Along the same line of criticism as that levelled in Eliade by Smith and Smart, Robert D. Baird argues that the phenomenological search for structures is ahistorical. A further problem with phenomenological structures is that they are not historically falsifiable, which implies that any attempt to verify them tends to be mere akin to theological verification.²² According to Baird, Eliade's use of structures also tends to negate the religious individuality of a person, if he/she must be understood in terms of universal structures because one participates in the archetypes to varying degrees and may be unaware, as Eliade affirms, of the deeper meaning of one's symbols, myths, and rites.²³ The unawareness of the transpersonal meaning of symbols by the religious individual is criticized by Gantford Dudley because it insulates Eliade's interpretation of archetypes against empirical testing.²⁴ Dudley, Baird, Smith, and Smart seem to agree that Eliade's approach to religious phenomena is both ahistorical and even anti-historical. This line of criticism

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