

Mircea Eliade

(1907 - 1986)

Phenomenology

Historical understanding of religious phenomena (Eliade's emphasis)

The Sacred: "Living in a sacralized cosmos" (1959, 17)

Hierophany

"...something sacred shows itself to us" (11)

Theophanies, signs etc..

Sacred space

Genesis 22; Genesis 28:16, 17; Exodus 3:5; etc..

"The center of the world" (36)

The cosmic mountain sacred rocks, trees, sanctuaries, holy shrines etc..

For religious man, this spatial nonhomogeneity finds expression in the experience of an oppositions between space that is sacred - the only *real* and *real-ly* existing space - and all other space, the formless expanse surrounding it. (20)

Sacred space is revealed through a hierophany: "the hierophany reveals an absolute fixed point, a center." (21). Sacred space can also be "provoked" through some particular ritual etc.. (27) "The real unveils itself" (63)

Chaos and Cosmos

Cosmos: area of inhabited space and the unknown space surrounding it.

Chaos: The area outside the inhabited area.

Chaos becomes Cosmos through the ritual of re-creation

Attacks threaten to turn Cosmos into Chaos

"Our" enemies belong to the powers of chaos. Any destruction of a city is equivalent to a retrogression to chaos. Any victory over the attackers reiterates the paradigmatic victory of the gods over the dragon (that is, over chaos). (48)

Sacred time

"...by its very nature sacred time is reversible in the sense that, properly speaking, it is a primordial, mythical time made present." (68)

Judeo - Christian concepts of liturgical time differ from "archaic" patterns of sacred time. Archaic patterns tend to emphasize *primordial, mythical, or original* time. Judeo - Christian time emphasizes the intervention of God in history rather than creation. (cf. 68-72)

New years celebrations:

The recreation of the world, renewed in its perfection as the Sacred intended.

"...*the world is renewed annually*; in other words, *with each new year it recovers* its original sanctity, the sanctity that it possessed when it came from the Creator's hands." (75)

Myth

Myth narrates a sacred history; it relates an event that took place in primordial Time, the fabled time of the 'beginnings.' In other words, myth tells how, through the deeds of Supernatural Beings, a reality came into existence, be it the whole of reality, the Cosmos, or only a fragment of reality - an island, a species of plant, a particular kind of human behavior, an institution.Myths describe the various and sometimes dramatic breakthroughs of the sacred (or the "supernatural") into the World. (1963, 6)

Once told, that is, revealed, the myth becomes apodictic truth; it establishes a truth that is absolute. "it is so because it is said that it is so,..." (1959, 95)

"Always a recital of creation" (95)

"...describes the various and sometimes dramatic irruptions of the sacred into the world...It is the irruption of the sacred into the world, an irruption narrated in the myths, that establishes the world as a reality." (97)

"...the supreme function of the myth is to 'fix' the paradigmatic models for all rites and all significant human activities..." (98)

imitatio dei The imitation of the gods as revealed by myth

Ritual, rites

"By means of and ritual "religious man can pass without danger from ordinary temporal duration to sacred time." (68)

Rites suggest the image of a bridge or narrow gate providing the passage from one existence to another. "a veritable ontological mutation" (181)

Involves initiations where the previous existence dies and a new one is born. Many symbols found based on patterns found in nature are employed (i.e. the significance of a three day period between death and a new life based on the patterns of the lunar month)

The Profane

"Living in a desacralized cosmos" (1959, 17)

"A recent discovery in the history of the human spirit" (1959, 13)

The current paradigm for the interpretation of reality, even in theology where the general approach puts little emphasis on concepts of the Sacred into exegetical assumptions; placing more value on empiricism and logic.

The Sacred of the profane:

Sacred space: Universities; Modern Israel; Birthplace of Marx; battlegrounds; "this place of honor" (Patton referring to a hospital); Catholic shrines.

The epic hero (Hitler)

Failure

Suffering (front lines)

"Death" (imprisonment)

Resurrection

Triumph to become the modern German Zarathustra.

Eliade, Mircea. 1959. The sacred and the profane: The nature of religion. New York: Harper and Brothers.

_____. 1963. Myth and reality. translated by Willard R. Trask. New York: Harper and Row.

MIRCEA ELIADE [PHENOMENOLOGY AND COMPARATIVE RELIGION] CLASS REPORT-David Balasingh

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INTRODUCTION

Eliade (1907-1986) Romanian born historian of religions humanist, orientalist, philosopher and creative writer. University of Bucharest. He learnt the importance of life experience, commitment, intuition, and the spiritual reality of mental worlds. Sense of destiny, "Decipher the message of the cosmos". The Maharaja of Kassimbar gave a grant to study Indian philosophy with Surendranath Dasgupta at the University of Calcutta (1928-1932). He also spent six months in the ashram of Rishikesh in the Himalayas. To him India was more than a place for scholarly research. Political tensions in Europe '30s. In Paris 1945-55, (self imposed exile). Philosophically inclined towards R. Otto (the irrational nature of religious experience, *mysterium tremendum*), and appreciative of the work of psychologist Carl Jung.

A prolific writer throughout his life. His morphology of religion has much in common with the Phenomenology of religion of G. Van der Leeuw (1890-1950). He is faithful to his principal of not giving an *a priori* definition of the religious phenomenon. Uses a wealth of illustrations from all corners of the world. In 1956 delivered the Haskell Lectures at the University of Chicago, and joined as professor. Encyclopedic in his knowledge. Editor in Chief of a monumental Encyclopedia of Religion. A friend and colleague of existential theologian Paul Tillich.

INSIGHTS

There are common elements in all peasant cultures. In the grasping of meaning the naturalist's "objectivity" must be tempered by the intelligent sympathy of the hermeneut. A trans/intra-cultural and imaginative hermeneutic. Key concepts include *hierophany*, *homo religiosus*, *archetypes*, *coincidentia oppositorum*. In a hierophany the object appears as the receptacle of an exterior force that differentiates it from its milieu and gives it meaning and value not previously possessed (excellent description of idolatry compare Icor8, 10:19,20). Among countless stones and trees one becomes sacred.

Examines religious forms side by side instead of moving from lower to higher as is done in evolutionary schemes of understanding history of religions.

Religion as experience can be studied phenomenologically, but religion as revelation must be studied theologically. Heidegger and the methodology of phenomenology: "Intentionality" and "Bracketing" (the sacred is bracketed from the profane). Phenomenological categories: *credo, curse, canon, cause, career, champion, code, cultus, and community*.

Eliade used non philosophical and non theological terms to discuss religious subjects and attracted secularized youths. The timeless pattern of crises-ordeals-violence-suffering-loss-reconquest -resurrection-knowledge. The doctrine of the irreducible religion is an important concept. Hierophanic manifestations are irreducible, religion has as its minimum definition some aspect of transcendence, and a paradoxical relationship between the sacred and the profane. Looks for correlates and contraries.

The concept of time, sacred time and myths. Myth is how a reality came into existence, it is doing what the gods did. Yoga the archaic form of spirituality that has survived connects to the protohistorical religion of India according Eliade (The concept of death and rebirth in *yogic samadhi*). Yoga can be explained as Doing (*asanas*) the opposite of what obligates humans to do, such as breath control etc., *citta* in Yogic understanding the object is no longer known by association. Being and knowing are not separated. Indian *Tantrism* transforms physiological acts into rituals. The valorization sometimes aberrant and infamous ceremonies

The language of the sacred. Celestial, biological, aquatic and other symbolism's are important (water- in ritual bath, baptism, and libation). The concept of the "inner heat" is know in many religions. The *Shaman* straddles the two worlds, and transmute ontological status. The idea of the specialist in the matters of the sacred is strong. They are mostly men, who become *shamans* by vocation, personal quest or inheritance. The dynamic between premodern religious human and modern nonreligious human is at the heart of the predicament. Christianity sanctifies the awareness of eternity behind time, while the Hindu sought to escape time in the cosmic cycle of creation destruction and creation according to the *mahayugas* (this is the *kali yuga* corresponding to the Aquarian age). The Christian hopes that history will come to an end. Christian faith "hangs" on historical revelation and eschatological culmination.

Read Morris (text) pp174-181. Religion as archetype.

ISSUES

The tendency to universalize 'our' ideas and values into the norm for all of humankind.

The breakdown of the east-west dynamic.

What is the ideal of the universal man(human)

The role of religion in the formation of the individual and social life world.

The triad of history, theology and philosophy.

A contrast to the analysis of Levi Strauss and much of structuralism.

Is it indeed possible to abolish the routine conditions of human existence, this is a meaning inferred from Indian Yoga.

The notion of a cosmic religion, and ontological grounding of its expressions. Not just description but explanation and interpretation is involved in his method. Draws from Hindu/Buddhist Tantric forms. A tendency towards romanticism is evident.

The relationship of the sacred and the profane, the historical nonhistorical, dialectical interaction.

Eliade regards Indian Philosophy to be critical for the fullest conceptual expression of the meaning of the sacred, is this defensible? The category of *maya-the state of illusion/ignorance* is an example. His scholarship and mastery of the Indian sacred texts is phenomenal.

He does not deal with the concepts of *nirvana* and *samsara* in mahayana Buddhism (the *madhyamika school*)

The problem of dichotomization (being-thinking, existence-essence, etc.,).

IMPLICATIONS

The consequences of "technological rationality" for the formation of conceptual structures of life. How do we deal with the average urbanite with an impoverished religious sense or a degenerated pseudo religious sense?

Is there a primordial ahistorical Christianity?

The need for a paradigmatic model for all rites and all significant human activity.

What do we mean when we say we are "on fire" for God?

The incorporation of orthodoxy as well as other religious traditions (Political and religious typologies)

The importance of the believer's analysis and point of view.

The need for a vision of the sacred.

What is the product of a theology not connected with the Holy, and a system of inquiry where faith is not primary.

Is the primitive person with a vivid awareness of the latent spirituality of the environment more truly religious and more fit to receive the message of the gospel than the practical down to earth urban "Christian"

The tendency of this methodology to avoid value judgment, respect religious intention and nature, and avoidance of reduction sets aside critical questions, and the criterion problem.

What kind of insights can a researcher get into zealously guarded secret rites and ceremonies?

Where is the center of life? According to vedic tradition water is the foundation for all things. Is there a positive religious meaning to the profane?

The value of *preparatio evangelica* hidden in the hierophanies? (incarnation; the highest hierophany)

How can we help the modern person who rarely appeals to the sacred, to deal with the existential anxiety (*angst*) of his or her life (Kierkegaard).

Can Christianity abandon its historical roots in eschatological Judaism in favor of archaic religious symbolism to enhance its "universal" appeal?

What is the uniqueness of Christian symbols compared with universally disseminated equivalent symbols? Is there uniqueness in Christian categories or are they non exclusive universals? What criteria can we use for valorization?

The path to the sacred, is it behind us in the archaic before us (Copernicus) or beyond us (mystic)?

Does the human mind react to natural/supernatural phenomena uniformly?

The dialogue with the modern person living in a desacralized cosmos. What does the modern person do to "kill" time? What are the myths of modern man (human)?