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The Legacy of Mircea Eliade

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MY ELIADE: PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON THE SPLENDOR OF THE STRANGE, THE SACRED AND THE SUBLIME

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Eliade is interesting precisely because he stands on the cusp between the modern (his concern for whispered “deep meanings”) and the postmodern (his smiling acceptance of the role of aesthetic artifice and imaginative fabulation in all human meaning). For me, the important realization is that Eliade had faith in the human ability to perceive, and be haunted by, the meaningful strangeness communicated by the language of sounds, surfaces, texts, bodies, and artifacts – that is, his affirmation that the human experience of reality is always clotted with a cosmology of signs and significations. It’s the *mana* in matter. Believing is seeing. Religion, like culture, has to do with the creative construction of real meaning “even when it isn’t there.” As rooted in his affirmation of the existential splendor of the strange, the sacred, and the sublime, Eliade’s approach was always aesthetically and drolly perspectival, perceptual, prescient, and post-postmodern.

Keywords: Mircea Eliade; sacred; sublime; hermeneutics of religion; Chicago School of the History of Religions; intellectual history of the 20th century.

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GLIMPSES INTO ELIADE’S RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

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A subject on which Eliade was always hesitant to speak in later life was his own religion. The charge that he was a crypto-theologian, I would reply

negatively. The History of Religions which he taught was a universal one, and despite the fact that Eliade was (or considered himself to be) an Orthodox Christian, giving allegiance as a Romanian to his national church, his true religion was too complex and generalized to be confined to any such limits. Although he was not a mystic, he sought divine consolation in his time of grief through prayer and acts of devotion, readings from the Bible and selected Christian inspirational works. But for the most part, his personal religion appears to have been at one with his history of religions teachings, his insights into the meaning of myths and symbols – the sacred revealed in the profane. He cultivated a strong interest in death and what lay beyond. Marginally, there were tentative excursions into “Guénonism,” the occult, and “superstition.” Negatively, Eliade’s religion had little or nothing to do with his erotic life (about which he wrote rather frankly in the *Portugal Journal*) and it owed nothing to Legionary teachings.

Keywords: Mircea Eliade, personal religious belief; *Portugal Journal*; Romanian cultural history in 20th c.; methodology; History of religions.

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**HARMLESS OR DANGEROUS? THE ERANOS CONFERENCES
IN THE 1930S FROM THE PERSPECTIVE
OF NATIONAL SOCIALIST GERMANY**

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In accordance with the arguments of the Reich Ministry of Science and Education, Hauer blamed Eranos to be a stronghold of bourgeois elitism and speculative thoughts being at variance with National Socialist key concepts like race and folk. It is easily understandable that Hauer’s paganism together with his narrow-minded racial interpretation of religion did not harmonize with most of the other Eranos speakers, even those from Germany such as Walter F. Otto, Erwin Rouselle, and Heinrich Zimmer. Their disregard of the voelkish and racial principles now reigning in Germany was the main point of critique expressed by the German authorities. According to their estimation, Eranos conveyed the impression of a reactionary movement that might easily shift to the level of ideological enmity. This statement is not unfounded regarding the political antagonism between the spirit of Eranos and the spirit of National Socialism. But to stress this difference should not misguide us to overlook the similarities characterizing the worldview orientation of Jung, Hauer, and Eranos on the whole.

Keywords: Eranos conferences; J. W. Hauer; C. G. Jung; Walter F. Otto; Erwin Rouselle; Heinrich Zimmer; interwar National Socialist ideology.

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**SACRIFICE – DEATH – SALVATION.
SOME REMARKS ON MIRCEA ELIADE'S
EARLY RELIGIOUS THOUGHT**

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This paper proposes to shed light on the Romanian roots of Mircea Eliade and in particular on the period between his return from India in 1931 and 1937, when the Romanian native fascist movement, the “Legion of the Archangel Michael” (a.k.a. the “Iron Guard”) reached its peak. Eliade’s last years in Romania have been of high interest for scholars when examining his methodological approach to religion in a more comprehensible way. At the same time, this period belongs to Eliade’s most delicate years regarding his political engagement. While scholars still expressed their astonishment throughout the 1980s when confronted with Eliade’s infamous past, the following decade brought forward new insights and a vast re-evaluation of his legacy. A series of highly controversial studies, followed by heated discussions in Romania and abroad, focussed on the question as to which extent Eliade nourished the rise and success of fascism and anti-Semitism in Romania. Not only Leon Volovici and Zigu Ornea’s detailed examination of intellectual discourses in Romania caused quite a stir, but also the publication of Mihail Sebastian’s *Journal* in 1996 revealed the gradual and incontestable “rhinocerization” of the famous historian of religions. In contrast, two other strongly biased approaches, namely Daniel Dubuisson’s *Mythologies du XX^e siècle* and Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine’s *L’oubli du fascisme*, did not strive for an even-handed inquiry of Eliade, but rather for explicitly denouncing his legacy. However, these “French methods”, as the Romanian philosopher Marta Petreu put it, and the concomitant polarizing disputes seem to be on the wane at present. The much-vaunted Eliade-biography by Florin Iurcanu and Horst Junginger’s recent anthology proved that a less agitated, fair-minded evaluation is about to prevail.

Keywords: sacrifice; death; salvation; Mircea Eliade; legionary movement in interwar Romania; Fascist study of religions.

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**UGO BIANCHIS RELIGIONSGESCHICHTLICHE „GNOSIS“
UND DIE GNOSISDEFINITION DER MESSINAKONFERENZ (1966)**

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„Was ist Gnosis?“ – so lautet der Titel einiger Bücher und Aufsätze, die vor Kurzem veröffentlicht wurden. Dieser Titel verrät einen Mangel an Konsens darüber, was unter „Gnosis“/„Gnostizismus“ verstanden werden soll. Einen der ersten systematischen Versuche, Gnosis zu definieren, unternahm der italienische Religionswissenschaftler Ugo Bianchi (1922-1995), der 1966 eine

Konferenz an der Universität Messina (Sizilien) mit dem Titel „Ursprünge des Gnostizismus“ veranstaltet hat. Trotz einer sorgfältigen Lektüre des Schlussdokumentes und der Vorträge, gilt der Definitionsvorschlag von Messina noch als nebulös, sogar unbrauchbar für die Anwendung auf eine kritische historische Untersuchung der Gnosis/des Gnostizismus. Zusammenfassend ist zu sagen, dass, obwohl nicht anwendbar, ja sogar unbrauchbar, es legitim ist, die Messinadefinition der Gnosis als einen Versuch zu betrachten, die spätantike Religiosität synchron (durch die vergleichende Methode) und diachron (d.h. historisch) religionswissenschaftlich zu untersuchen. Die größte Hoffnung Bianchis war, die beiden Methoden der Religionswissenschaft (nämlich die Religionsphänomenologie und die philologisch orientierte historische Forschung der Religionen) zusammen zu bringen. Dies versuchte er erstmals am Beispiel der Gnosis, indem er die Messinakonferenz veranstaltet hat. Die Messinadefinition der Gnosis bzw. des Gnostizismus sollte - wenn auch teilweise von der Gnosisphilosophie Hans Jonas' beeinflusst - die religionswissenschaftliche Vision Bianchis konkretisieren. All dieses kann aber nur verstanden werden, wenn man die Messinadefinition im Kontext ihres Entstehungsprozesses und als Teil des lebenslangen Projektes Ugo Bianchis liest.

Keywords: Gnosis; definition; methodology; conference on Gnosticism in Messina (1967), Ugo Bianchi; historiography of religion.

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**THE UNPUBLISHED CORRESPONDENCE
BETWEEN UGO BIANCHI AND IOAN PETRU CULIANU**

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Regarding the history of the field of the history of religions, this correspondence surely represents not only an accurate chronicle of Bianchi's main interests after 1970, but also indicates the order and priorities of the areas of study taken up by his disciple. In this connection, this article point out that we are dealing with the post-Marburg period (1960), i.e. the period following the tenth edition of the IAHR (*International Association For The History Of Religions*) congress where Ugo Bianchi suggested the articulation of a discourse on historical-religious method which would be divorced from exclusively theological, ecclesiastical, metaphysical and philosophical approaches. Furthermore, the first part of the exchange takes place in a post-messina period, the place where in 1966 the *Colloquio internazionale sulle origini dello gnosticismo* was held, also under Bianchi's supervision, and whose proceedings were published in 1967. This period was preceded by intense interest in the *status quaestionis* and related problems posed by

Gnosticism of the late antiquity, mainly investigated by using the historical-comparative approach.

Keywords: Ugo Bianchi; Ioan Petru Culianu; Mircea Eliade; historiography; IAHR.

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MIRCEA ELIADE AND IOAN PETRU CULIANU

ON NARCOTICS AND RELIGION

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I think the way in which a historian of religions and a specialist of the sacred of Eliade's calibre understood the hippie movement in its own environment, in the American student's milieu, is significant. But it is equally important to see how, in his turn, the professor influenced an entire generation of young people. What is more, besides the analysis of student-professor relationship, of the relations between a representative of the "parents' generation" and the representatives of the "young people's generation", it is also interesting to see how a "mainly right-wing intellectual" related with a "mainly left-wing" social movement (for example, the conflict between Eliade's structural anticommunism and the opposition to the Vietnam war of the young rebels). Like Mircea Eliade, Culianu was very interested in the role the psychoactive substances play in different mythical-religious and magical-ritual manifestations. In his monograph on the otherworldly journeys, Culianu detected three distinct ways of producing ecstasies and out-of-the world visions: *Altered States of Consciousness*, *Out-of-Body Experiences* and *Near-Death Experiences*. In the first two, the consumption of psychotropic plants is sometimes attested.

Keywords: psychoactive substances; hippie movement; narcotics; shamanism; hallucinogens; Mircea Eliade; Ioan Petru Culianu.

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EDIȚIA CRITICĂ COMPLETĂ ELIADE?

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A first evaluation of the main desiderata, problems, and tasks in proposing a complete international edition of Eliade's scholarly works, including a list of more than 500 Indic languages mistakes in Eliade's published PhD (1936), and the unpublished dedicace of Eliade to Cioran (May 1936).

Keywords: Mircea Eliade; complete critical edition; historiography of the academic study of religions; *Yoga: Essai sur les origines de la mystique indiennes* (1936); Sanskrit & Pali flaws.

Religions & Modernity | Hermetic Currents & Esotericism

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PAROLES DE PIERRE. KYRILLOS LOUKARIS

ET LES DÉBATS RELIGIEUX DU XVII^e SIÈCLE

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Le récit de la mort de Loukaris a été composé par son jeune protégé Nathanail Konopios. Selon l'avis de son premier éditeur — Hottinger —, c'était un témoignage oculaire, fiable, écrit une semaine après l'événement. Pourtant Nathanail dit clairement, une fois décrite la déposition du défunt dans le petit monastère de Saint André, que le corps resta là « jusqu'à ce que le criminel fut exilé ». Le « criminel » — Kyrillos Kondaris, le successeur du « vieux » Kyrillos Loukaris — fut déposé et jeté en prison le 19 juin 1639. La lettre de Konopios en est donc postérieure. En fait, elle constitue une superbe pièce littéraire, un long lament censée à démontrer la sainteté du personnage central. Le renvoi constant aux derniers jours de Jésus en est la preuve : le lecteur se trouve devant une hagiographie. L'écriture n'est point innocente.

Keywords: Cyril Lukaris; religious debates; 17th c. religious history; edition of unpublished manuscripts; Konopios; Hottinger; Protestant-Orthodox relations.

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CĂLUŞ AND CĂLUŞARI

CEREMONIAL SYNTAX AND NARRATIVE MORPHOLOGY

IN THE GRAMMAR OF THE ROMANIAN CĂLUŞ

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Bringing forth the Romanian *Căluş* in a context of sacred and magical medicine can pass for a two-bladed sword: on the one hand, it asserts the existence of a specific affliction, of meta-mundane etiology; while on the other hand, it states that there is a ritual institution responsible for the cure. As we shall demonstrate in the pages below, this equation is but a dimension to the multifarious phenomenon the *Căluş* is. Whether or not it is a vital dimension, testifying about ceremoniality within folkloric European societies, as answer to institutionalized disruptions over

internal rhythms, this stays one of our core theoretical preoccupations. Always at the core, we hold the articulation of narrativity and ceremoniality of a same ritual/mythical/religious complex, in the course of its trans- and inter-generational transmission. We endeavor here to address these questions, as applied to *Căluș*, on several explanatory levels, as follows: the narrative threshold of approaching the *Căluș*, and its availability for the ethnologist; the mythical-fictional nature of field narratives, about the specific ailment and healing contained within this tradition; the incidence of the dramatized ceremonial within the year cycle, and finally, the cure the *Căluș* engenders: descriptively, analogically, differentially.

Keywords: *Căluș*; ethnography of religion; methodology; Romanian folklore; ritual; ceremonial.

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**LE LIVRE CHRÉTIEN DES MORTS DE TOMMASO PALAMIDESSI :
UN ARS MORIENDI ÉSOTÉRIQUE DU XX^E SIÈCLE**

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Le sujet que nous nous proposons d'aborder dans notre communication est la dimension eschatologique présente dans l'œuvre d'un ésotériste chrétien italien du XX^e siècle, Tommaso Palamidessi (1915-1983). Le terme « eschatologie » renvoie ici à toute réflexion globale portant sur le salut, individuel et collectif, et en particulier sur le sort de l'âme dans les mondes suprasensibles. Afin de développer notre réflexion, nous nous appuyons sur la lecture du *Livre chrétien des morts* (*Libro cristiano dei morti*), ouvrage auquel Palamidessi travailla de 1968 jusqu'à sa mort, sans parvenir à l'achever. Le volume fut publié à titre posthume en 1985. Nous examinerons tout d'abord les grands axes thématiques du *Livre chrétien des morts*, puis ses sources principales. Enfin, nous formulerons quelques remarques d'ordre plus théorique, en essayant de mettre en évidence certaines tendances générales des courants ésotériques chrétiens modernes et contemporains, envisagés dans leurs rapports avec les modèles du christianisme traditionnel.

Keywords: Tommaso Palamidessi; esotericism; *Livre chrétien des morts*; eschatology; death.

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HERMETICA ITALICA

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Ermete, nella ipostasi di Trismegisto, il «Tre volte grande» antenato mitico della scienza astrologica, aveva formulato, o forse trasmesso, la teoria della «simpatia cosmica» e dell'indissolubile legame fra macrocosmo e

microcosmo. Assimilato al dio egizio Thoth, Ermete era ritenuto il divino protettore degli alchimisti e l'alchimia, che ha alla base di ogni sua operazione e trasformazione i quattro elementi e le loro diverse combinazioni, era denominata «Scienza ermetica». Tali le sue origini mitologiche. L'iniziazione ermetico-alchemica è continuata nei secoli in forme e metodi a volte di dubbia provenienza, sedicenti «Maestri» e «Adepti» hanno ascripto il loro sapere al verbo di Ermete, con esiti a volte in palese attrito con il dogma originario. È un discorso teoretico per introdurre due brevi messe a punto su un paio di indagatori i segreti dell'anima, due moderni «filosofi ermetici» noti principalmente per la loro produzione deiettiva, raffazzonata da zelanti, nonché apocrifi, discepoli.

Keywords: Hermes Trismegistos; esotericism; hermetism; Gnosticism; adepts; Italian esoteric currents; alchemy.

MISCELLANEA

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POLITICS, ETCETERA. Review article: *Hermeneutics, Politics, and the History of Religions. The Contested Legacies of Joachim Wach and Mircea Eliade*, ed. by Christian WEDEMEYER and Wendy DONIGER, Oxford University Press, 2010 265

I will pronounce the conference and the volume containing the presentations made there as uneven, but on the whole of great value for assessing the “contested legacies” of Joachim Wach and Mircea Eliade. The variety of viewpoints articulated is diverse, and by no means uniform in value. However, it is evident that the planning committee wished to include both friends and foes of Eliade, as well as admirers and critics of Wach, and in that respect, it succeeded. A common fault of several participants was lack of knowledge of the Romanian language sources; a larger number did not possess an adequate familiarity with Eliade’s vast corpus. But on the whole, the speakers were sufficiently informed concerning their topics. I have made my criticisms of each of them already. In conclusion, I highly recommend this book to the serious scholar of the history of religions, and predict that it will long remain a basic reference work.

Keywords: ‘Chicago School’ of the History of Religions; Mircea Eliade; Joachim Wach; academic proceedings; critical intellectual history; comparative religion.

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