

Norman GIRARDOT & Bryan RENNIE (*Guest Editors*)
Remembering | Reimagining | Revalorizing Mircea Eliade

ABSTRACTS & KEYWORDS

Norman GIRARDOT

**INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL THEMATIC ISSUE ON
REMEMBERING | REIMAGINING | REVALORIZING MIRCEA ELIADE**

The time has come to move beyond the overly abrupt “End of the Eliadean Era” judgments that came after Mircea Eliade’s rather ignominious death. However there have been important recent signs of some renewed interest in the Eliadean perspective on religion and culture. This special issue contributes to these developments by assembling a group of articles that “remember,” “reimagine,” and “revalorize” the Eliadean corpus.

KEYWORDS: Eliade, religion, University of Chicago, *Archaeus*, Francis Ford Coppola, “Youth Without Youth”, American Academy of Religion.

| *Remembering* |

Mircea ELIADE

THE BRIDGE (translated by Mac Linscott Ricketts)

One of Eliade’s more difficult novellas to decipher, it consists of a series of seemingly unconnected plots involving a variety of characters, whose bizarre adventures gradually become more interwoven as the work progresses. The main theme is the unrecognizability of miracle, or the camouflage of mystery in ordinary reality. Not a fantastic story, it belongs more properly to the genre of mystery or philosophical narrative.

KEYWORDS: *Coincidentia oppositorum*, unrecognizability of miracle, camouflage of mysteries, negative theology, exit, Upaniṣads, *brahman*, *ātman*, *māyā*, Magna Mater.

Mac Linscott RICKETTS

HOW THE BRIDGE WAS WRITTEN

What Eliade discloses in his *Journal* about how he wrote *The Bridge*.

KEYWORDS: Mircea Eliade, *Decameron*, negative theology, Upaniṣads, *Isabel și apele diavolului*, *Șarpele*, *coincidentia oppositorum*, camouflage.

Ali Shehzad ZAIDI
THE AMBIGUITY OF MIRACLE IN ELIADE'S
"A FOURTEEN-YEAR-OLD PHOTOGRAPH"

Mircea Eliade's "A Fourteen-Year Old Photograph" is a short story about a miraculous rejuvenation. Dumitru, a Romanian immigrant, returns to a church in search of a miracle worker named Dr. Martin, believing that four years earlier Dr. Martin had cured his wife Thecla of asthma, simply by holding up a ten-year old photograph of her. According to Dumitru, Thecla was cured of her asthma and began to resemble her image in the photograph, taken when she was just eighteen or nineteen years old. A church board member tells Dumitru that not only was Dr. Martin no longer performing miracles at the church, but that he was a fraud named Dugay. Dumitru finds Dugay in a nightclub called the Three Hundred, where Dugay confesses to Dumitru that he was indeed a fraud. Dumitru continues to insist on the truth of the miracle even as Dugay becomes convinced that the true saint and worker of miracles was none other than Dumitru himself. Ultimately, the equivocal nature of the miracle is a means to revelation, gesturing to the illusory nature of the self and to such notions of Eliade as the camouflage of the sacred and the unrecognizability of miracle.

KEYWORDS: "A Fourteen-Year-Old Photograph", the fantastic, short story, camouflage of the sacred, unrecognizability of the miracle.

| *Reimagining* |

Bryan RENNIE
FACT AND INTERPRETATION:
***SUI GENERIS* RELIGION, EXPERIENCE, ASCRIPTION, AND ART**

This paper argues that Eliade can best be seen as a proponent of the recently named "attribution theory" rather than of the "*sui generis* discourse" on religion. The *sui generis* discourse itself can be seen as an example of attributing factuality to interpretation (and thereby artificially polarizing the academic study of religion). Comparing conceptually determined perceptions to certain cognitive phenomena it is suggested that religious art uses traditional forms to enable the apperception of "the sacred" in mundane experience and that such use of art is the mechanism by which religious traditions may enhance and tune experience in existentially valuable ways.

KEYWORDS: attribution theory, *sui generis* discourse, fact and interpretation, religion and art, attention, apperception, valorization.

Teuvo LAITILA
MIRCEA ELIADE, AUTHENTIC BEING,
AND DIALOGICAL MAPPING OF LIVED RELIGIOSITY

This paper suggests a way to allow religious persons their own voice, seeking to privilege neither the perspective of people claiming to have religious experiences

nor that of scholars. Instead of taking Eliade's claims as absolute they are taken as subjective expressions of the perspective of the religious person. Eliade's 'Center' and 'the sacred' are compared to Heidegger's '*Urgrund*,' which may be manifest in particular time and place but not confined to either because its meaning does not arise from any singular manifestation but from repetitions and relations. The role of language in the study of religious experience is thus reconsidered and the possibility is raised of representing religious experience in comprehensible etic terms that do not distort the emic perspective. 'Translation' from emic to etic terms is not to render individual words or concepts but to find 'rules' used to determine the nature of a given description. This allows an understanding of religious categories as created by language and thus extant as human constructions, and in that sense real. Religious experience is not a rational choice but a cognitive response to experience in which 'the sacred' is a 'fact' existing in the inter-subjective 'terrain' of society, culture, tradition, and language. Persons believing in gods exist, and they, not gods, are the subject of dialogical understanding. Their explanations must be taken seriously, not because they are true or false, but because privileging any one position prevents new knowledge.

KEYWORDS: real existence, authentic being, religious experience, language, authentic religion, emic/etic terms, phenomenology of religion.

Jeremy BILES

**GAMBLING WITH ELIADE:
LAS VEGAS AND THE DISASTER OF THE SACRED**

Though Mircea Eliade claims that the sacred is ambivalent – both holy and cursed – a close examination of his writings reveals a privileging of the right, or pure, side of the sacred and a concomitant suppression of the left, or impure, side. This paper turns to Georges Bataille's theory of the sacred in order to return the suppressed, left sacred in Eliade. An investigation of the sacred "camouflaged" within the profane excesses of Las Vegas testifies to the full amplitude of the sacred, demonstrating that the ecstasies of Sin City are ambivalent, simultaneously exalting and exhausting.

KEYWORDS: Mircea Eliade, Georges Bataille, sacred, uncanny, ecstasy, festival, Las Vegas.

| *Revalorizing* |

Lindsay JONES

**REVALORIZING MIRCEA ELIADE'S NOTION OF REVALORIZATION:
REFLECTIONS ON THE PRESENT-DAY RE-USES OF MESOAMERICA'S
PRE-COLUMBIAN SITES AND ARCHITECTURE**

Though Mircea Eliade's use of the term of "revalorization" is only intermittent in his written work, it is arguably a central theme in his understanding of the ways in which religious traditions invariably "make meaning" by retrieving and

refashioning ideas and practices from previous traditions. His *History of Religious Ideas*, for instance, directs attention to the creative and interested, if often poorly informed, means by which religious communities undertake this sort of resuscitation of earlier traditions, which they inevitably warp and wedge to their current purposes. I extend – or “revalorize” – the term, moreover, to address the creative if sometimes poorly informed ways in which scholars have appropriated concepts from Eliade, and then put those formulations to service (or maybe disservice) in their own interpretive projects. In that spirit, I reutilize Eliade’s notion of revalorization, together with his ample comments on religious symbols, as a means of respecting the ever-shifting, still-emergent usages and meanings of centuries-old Mesoamerican ruins. On the basis of that exercise, I conclude that Eliade’s variously revered and maligned corpus, when engaged in suitably inventive and strategic ways, remains relevant, challenging and useful in the extreme.

KEYWORDS: Mesoamerica, Mexico, architecture, ruins, revalorization, symbols, Eliade.

Jess HOLLENBACK

**WHAT’S WRONG WITH SYMBOLS?:
REVISITING MIRCEA ELIADE IN THE 21st CENTURY**

This article argues that today’s scholars of religion need to stop ignoring symbols and symbolization and seriously revisit Eliade’s contributions to the symbolic dimension of religion. This article also suggests that this revisitation of Eliade would benefit greatly if it simultaneously made use of the many excellent scholarly studies of symbols and symbolization that have been published during the last twenty years or so by linguists, paleoanthropologists, ethologists, cognitive neuroscientists, theologians, and psychologists. This paper concludes by revisiting Eliade’s persistent fascination with the paranormal and suggests some ways that revalorizing both the symbolic and the paranormal might be productive directions for further research.

KEYWORDS: Eliade, symbols, symbolization, symbolism, paranormal phenomena, active imagination, imaginal empowerment, stigmatization.

Jeffrey J. KRIPAL

**THE FUTURE HUMAN:
MIRCEA ELIADE AND THE FANTASTIC MUTANT**

The present essay traces an intellectual history of the categories of the psychical and the paranormal through social history, philosophy, anthropology, psychology, literature, and, finally, the history of religions. It then turns to the late writings of Mircea Eliade and Ioan Couliano, demonstrating how these two men took up modern physics to think seriously about the various altered states of the history of gnosticism, esotericism, and mysticism. The essay concludes with a discussion of

Francis Ford Coppola's treatment of Eliade's novel *Youth Without Youth*, focusing in on the theme of the mystic or psychic as mutant.

KEYWORDS: psychical, paranormal, parapsychology, Arthur Schopenhauer, Sigmund Freud, Carl Gustav Jung, Andrew Lang, Mircea Eliade, Ioan Couliano [Ioan Petru Culiianu], Francis Ford Coppola, mysticism, occultism.

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JEREMY BILES holds a PhD from the University of Chicago Divinity School. He is the author of *Ecce Monstrum: Georges Bataille and the Sacrifice of Form* (Fordham University Press, 2007), which examines Bataille's linking of the sacred with monstrosity in the areas of philosophy, religious experience, literature, and visual art. He teaches courses on religion, philosophy, art, and popular culture at institutions including DePaul University and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where he is an instructor in the photography and the liberal arts departments. His courses treat such topics as sacrifice, comparative mysticisms, monsters and monstrosity, theories of the sacred, the philosophy of religion, and photography and death. Concerned especially with the category of the sacred in relation to contemporary culture, he has written on such diverse topics as the materiality of otherworldly experiences, network culture, monster truck rallies, the religious dimensions of visual art, and madness as a mode of sacred experience. Biles recently contributed an essay on "The Remains of God: Bataille's Sacrificial Community" to *Culture, Theory and Critique*, and an essay on "The Paranormality of Everyday Life: Childhood, Mysticism, Madness" to the forthcoming volume *Seriously Strange: The Anomalous in Psychology and Physics* (edited by Sudhir Kakar and Jeffrey Kripal, Viking, 2012). Further reviews, essays, fiction, and other writings have appeared in such places as the *Journal of Religion*, the *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory*, *Religion Dispatches*, and *Snow Monkey*, as well as in catalogs for the Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago, where he curated the 2003 *Zounds* exhibition. His essay "Blindsight (Shades of Vivian Maier)" appeared in the catalog for the traveling exhibition *Vivian Maier, Photographer*. Biles is book reviews editor for the *Religious Studies Review* and is currently co-editing (with Kent Brintnall) a volume entitled *Negative Ecstasies: Georges Bataille and the Study of Religion*.

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surrounding Eliade goes back to his days at Notre Dame when he organized the first American conference on Eliade's literary work and, with Mac Ricketts, co-edited the book *Imagination and Meaning: The Scholarly and Literary Worlds of Mircea Eliade* (1982). His current research and writing largely concerns outsider artistic and visionary tradition, especially as seen in the work of artists like Mr. Imagination, Howard Finster, Aloise Corbaz and others. These pursuits will culminate in an interpretive book for the University of California Press focused on the frantically prolific Southern Baptist preacher, maverick outsider, and visionary artist, Howard Finster (1916-2001) scheduled to appear in 2012-2013.

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