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# SYMMETRIES BETWEEN MIRCEA ELIADE'S PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT AND THE MODERN SCIENTIFIC QUEST

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this paper is to offer a transdisciplinary approach to the cultural project proposed by Mircea Eliade, highlighting the symmetry between the eliadean theory centred on the potential of human consciousness to resonate with the sacred dimension of existence and the most daring cosmological models promoted by modern science. My presentation will develop on the basis of scientific, literary and autobiographic works, in which Eliade demonstrates an increased interest in theories that might explain the way in which the observer's consciousness can transcend limits, revealing the fact that reality is incalculably larger and deeper. In an attempt to grasp the significance Eliade sees in the interaction between quantum epistemology and the Oriental traditions, we will point out that, in Mircea Eliade's view, this revolutionary understanding of the transsubjective dimension of reality begins to offer a more complex image of the inner order of natural systems with a view to reflecting the tremendous importance of unifying knowledge.

*Keywords:* Mircea Eliade, transdisciplinarity, extended consciousness, cosmization

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## **1. Introduction**

What does it mean, according to Mircea Eliade, to ask the right question? This interrogation guides us in our research, taking us to a fascinating laboratory of creation, whose continuous movement illustrates the mystery of incompleteness involved in any act of knowledge. Intuiting the transformative valences of the new framework of thought generated by ternary logic, Mircea Eliade was preoccupied with identifying correlations between and beyond scientific areas, indicating the need to develop a spiritual synthesis that will make the renewal of mankind possible [1]. While studying reintegration myths, Eliade becomes aware of the presence of archetypal structures reflecting Totality in various aspects of human activity, from literature and art to spiritual and scientific endeavours. The Romanian scholar remarks that Physics and Mathematics in particular are beginning to discover structures of the natural

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systems that are also revealed by the sacred texts of mankind. Mircea Eliade's view regarding the ontology of the sacred is formed in close relation to these correspondences:

“Something else interests us: the fact that precise thinking uses the same models as archaic thinking. The notions of energy, movement, spiral etc. – are similarly found in the ancient concepts, to say nothing of the notion of law. They are revealed as having the same structure but in a different context and validated on different planes of human existence.” [2]

Driven by the desire to penetrate the mysteries of the universe and fascinated by all the organisms' impressive tendency to form complex structures, the representatives of the Western genius find revealing information within the wisdom of the Orient, which can be verified through the experiments of Quantum physics. By following the results of this interaction between modern physics and the Oriental traditions, Eliade understands the decisive role of the human consciousness in perceiving and transforming the levels of reality, heightening the importance of deepening the links between the depths of the human spirit and the continuous movement of the universe.

It can be said, in the light of the previously discussed ideas, that Eliade aimed to discover an efficient way of overcoming the epistemologic model given by Aristotelism. The Romanian philosopher of religions makes numerous references to what is beyond the polarities, to the simultaneity of symbolic meanings, to A and non-A being the same. He highlights the existence of a level which is no longer informed by dualism, as it is structured through the coincidence between *esse* and *non-esse*, between the sacred and the profane.

Eliade was interested in the trans-subjective dimension of reality and hoped that, by understanding the quantum world, authentic collaboration with life could be reached [3]. In their turn, starting from the idea that “the sacred is a structure of human consciousness” [4], numerous scientists understand the necessity of using a different logic, the logic of the hidden third theorised by Stefan Lupasco, in order to contribute to the configuration of a new view upon the world.

## **2. The roots of the eliadean theory of the camouflage of the sacred in the profane**

Mircea Eliade's theories of the camouflage of the sacred in the profane suggest that the spiritual adventure of man requires the existence of multiple levels of reality, harmonized in the extended consciousness. A world wraps itself almost imperceptibly around another, governed by laws which can be expressed only through symbols. *Homo symbolicus*, Mircea Eliade points out, is engaged in an endless spiritual adventure which occurs on multiple cosmic levels. The writer distinguishes between the planes of the created world, with its illusory forms, and the transcendent level of eternity. Although gates towards the sacred are open through symbols, the level of meaning accessed by each consciousness depends on one's choices.

Eliade indicates the inner pattern governing religious experiences which reflect different stages of harmonizing structures of consciousness. For most men living in desacralized societies there is the fear generated by the fantastic presence revealed by "the rupture produced in space" [5]. Gradually, symbols bring about remembrance of sacred knowledge about existing beyond time and history. For the archaic homo religious, these correspondences between cosmic levels and the structures of consciousness were actualized effortlessly, with serenity, which allowed him or her to periodically regenerate time and give meaning to every aspect of existence. This spiritual attitude, Eliade argues, is the expression of cosmization, of reintegrating the human being in the dimension of circular, reversible time. At this level, human consciousness can perceive the camouflage of the sacred in the profane, and, more than that, it goes further, creating the possibility to experience Totality, absolute freedom from the constraints of the human condition.

Referring to his own experience, as Eliade writes in the first volume of the *Autobiography*, there were three unforgettable events that marked his early childhood. The encounter with a blue lizard, the out of time experience in the room like a grape berry, the eyes of the little girl walking on the street with her grandmother, all these are internalized under the sign of life enlightened by the intuition of divine grace that unifies all cosmic planes. Inspired by his Biology teacher, Eliade developed a remarkable interest in Natural science. In the years that followed, the young researcher concentrated on religious and philosophical thought, guided by the impulse to explore the depth of life, the correspondences between the human endeavour to study natural systems and the actualization of new creations of the spirit. It is also significant that Eliade was exposed to Nae Ionescu's philosophical ideas which, as Mac Linscott Ricketts points out, reflect the existence of three reality planes that can be understood only through adopting the spiritual attitude that is in resonance with each of them. However, for Eliade, this vision mirrored the movement of his own laboratory of creation, which aimed to reach universal dimensions [6].

Let us now follow the eliadean magic itinerary. In an article published in *Lumea (The World)*, in 1925, Eliade focuses on the problem of ancient esoteric practices. Bearing in mind old patterns of knowledge, he suggests modern scientists should go beyond the formal, exterior aspects of reality. Unfortunately, the young researcher states that modern science refuses to change its ways, even if there is proof that reality is deeper. Despite the evidence, Eliade argues, the laws of unbreakable matter are still the most important, although far from being complete: "A man with common sense is terrified by the absurd: why? Because the absurd destroys what we know about the world by human means, because the absurd is something which cannot be contained by the forms we believe to be real and which are but human, meaning they are subjective and transient; but who says this absurd is not maybe even closer to the truth than what we consider to be truth through our fragmented science?... I trust I have now proven that ancient esoteric science knew things of greater importance than our science, because it had set out on a more secure path. [...] Why such obstinacy in

refusing to model scientific research according to the truth of the new discoveries which loom at the horizon?" [7]

The young Eliade insists on the fact that the representatives of the Western genius will inevitably be exposed to the dimensions of the spirit in their attempt to penetrate the mystery of the profound organisation of the fabric of the universe. To this end, the experience of the extended consciousness, which was part of traditional man's existence, reveals that the complexity of the created world can only be perceived by relating to the transcendent plane of life, whose information is solely accessible to those minds which are beyond the constraints of individuality, abandoning themselves to the flow of inner life.

In 1934, while doing research in India for his doctoral thesis on Yoga, Eliade writes about *The subjective character of Indian Physics*. He shows that the Vaisesika system illustrates the correspondences between the levels of the created world and the structures of human consciousness. „Indian Physics remains in permanent contact with human experience”, Eliade points out, thus illustrating the role of the human factor in structuring reality. Experiences are actualised in accordance with the Karmic equation of every person, whose informational content depends on the level of perception attained by the human being. Moreover, according to the Indian physicist, „the Universe is not reconstituted through purely objective categories. On the contrary, these objective elements, time, space, movement, only play a secondary role, as they are subordinated to Karmic individual equations as well”. Indian Physics, Eliade concludes in this paper, remains rooted in the depth of reality, being “in permanent contact with human experience” [8].

The scholar emphasises that the sacred is a structure of the human consciousness, showing that integral human being, the one who harmonises the inner world with the cosmic rhythms, can organise reality differently, gaining freedom from the terror of history. Thus, the spiritual synthesis which Eliade wished to actualise within the plane of his own existence and which he believed mankind will know through the entry of the archaic and extra-European cultures in history, does not entail returning to the way of being of the primitive. People's participation in history has caused irreversible transformations and the second fall of man renders life meaningless. Knowledge obtained only by means of the intellect separates the human being from the other systems of the created world, reducing everything to matter.

As Ricketts points out, Eliade was preoccupied with the idea of “great truths” being “hidden in chance events” [6, p. 584], showing that the mysterious “coming together” [8, p. 236] about which he wrote in *Oceanography* is possible. This is, in Eliade's view, a miracle that the human being experiences without the fear associated with the perception of the “rupture of the plane” [9]. Beyond contrast, the total human being enters the dimension of the eternal present, detaching himself or herself from the manifested aspects of the universal consciousness.

As the entries in the journal show, Eliade states that, by taking a completely different path, Ștefan Lupașcu expresses in his theories the same paradoxical coincidence between A and non-A. Eliade looks with interest at this concern of the Romanian logician for the antagonistic dynamic of the natural systems, and sees in it another important sign of the opening of human consciousness towards the information of the reintegration in Totality, reflected in all the religious traditions of mankind. The symmetry of thought that marked the relationship between the two scientists is fascinating especially because it existed in the absence of a close collaboration. Starting from the eliadean *Journal*, Mircea Handoca remarks the fact that Eliade and Lupașcu probably saw each other approximately 8 times, between 1943 and 1975 [10]. Like Eliade, Lupașcu starts from presocratic intuitions to demonstrate that any systematisation is underpinned by an energetic antagonism: „Energy, no matter what form it takes, not only holds antagonistic dynamisms, but these dynamisms are and must be governed in such a way that the actualisation of one should imply the potentialisation of the other or they should be in such manner that both should exist on the two trajectories of the passage from potential to actual or from actual to potential, towards or into a state of simultaneously equal potentialisation and equal actualisation of one dynamism in relation to the other.” [11]

By placing knowledge under the sign of contradiction, and by bearing in mind the metaphysical and religious meanings of the second principle of thermodynamics together with the significance of the exclusion principle formulated by Wolfgang Pauli, the Romanian logician notices the fascinating balance of opposite forces at quantum level. He thus points to the correspondences between the subatomic world and the plane on which both “the organising antagonism of the living organisms” and “the factors of homogenisation” which are active in inanimate matter manifest themselves [11, p. 34]. Thus, looking at the macroscopic plane of the created world, Lupașcu observes that antagonism wanes, with the actualised systems inclining towards both heterogenisation and homogenisation, because the entropy increases, time becomes irreversible, until “the maximum of entropy is at the same time a state of absolute order” [12].

The same structure of balance between the tendencies of unification and of differentiation which organise the movement and the transformation of the natural systems is reflected in the religious philosophy studied by Eliade. Because of this, by noting the results of the scientific activities undertaken by Lupașcu, the historian of religions highlights the importance of translating Sanskrit texts so that they can be “accessible to Western philosophers and logicians” [13]. Writing about the ‘metaphysical validity’ of Indian art, Eliade remarks the way in which the artist, who imitates ‘the act of nature’, creates in order to capture the life’s impulse of manifesting itself in as many and as diverse forms as possible, in events which are spawned from a continuous flux that absorbs them afterwards in order to create new actualisations: „No matter how you have looked at an Indian painting, you must return again and again to view

it in its wholeness, in its organic movement. Each example flows – you sense it pervaded by life, even to the most insignificant corner – and you cannot look at it fragmentarily, you cannot isolate one gesture from another and evaluate it independently. It all escapes you if you have not perceived this continuum of plastic life, if you have not intuited this vital current, the sap which passes through each line and links it to another and yet another, as in an organic circuit.” [14]

We can remark the amazing coherence between the eliadean theories referring to the mystery of the human condition and Ștefan Lupascu’s ideas regarding the included middle, which is now even more clearly highlighted by Basarab Nicolescu’s introduction of ‘the key concept of transdisciplinarity’, *the level of reality*, defined as “an ensemble of systems invariant to the action of a number of general laws: for example, the quantum entities subject to the quantum laws, which are in a radical rupture with the laws of the macrophysical world” [12, p. 78]. It has been pointed out that in order to better comprehend the concrete as a creation of the spirit, the opening towards “the complementary zone of non-resistance” [12, p. 90], to which the ensemble of the levels of reality extends, is necessary.

This transcendent dimension, in whose movement both the levels of reality of the subject and those of the object participate, corresponds to the sacred. Through this experience of the transcendent, as Eliade demonstrates it, “the human spirit has observed the difference between what is revealed as real, strong, rich and significant, and what is devoid of these qualities, the chaotic and dangerous flow of forms, their meaningless appearance and disappearance” [4]. The zone of non-resistance is the hidden middle, whose information is impossible to access solely through the intellect, as it corresponds to the non-manifested aspect of the universal consciousness. However, the included middle “is logical, because it refers to the contradictory A and non-A, situated in the zone of resistance” [12, p. 90], reflecting the information of contradiction as a fundamental aspect of the roots of the created world.

### **3. The Eranos experience**

A fundamental transition stage is experienced by Eliade after the war, due to his participation in the Eranos conferences at Ascona. These academic events reflect the holistic trends that began to develop in the XX<sup>th</sup> century, stressing the importance of renewing mankind’s understanding of reality. ‘The Eranos spirit’ brought together scientists such as Carl Gustav Jung, Gershom Scholem, Károly Kerényi, Henry Corbin, Joseph Kitagawa, together with representatives of exact sciences like Wolfgang Pauli, Adolf Portmann and Max Knoll. Working in diverse fields of knowledge, they were all fascinated by the study of phenomena that point to the existence of inner cosmic order, which the human being can learn to rediscover. Eliade’s theories referring to a superior valorisation of man due to a better understanding of the creations of the spirit were considerably influenced by the debates that animated these encounters with the aim of

developing a hermeneutics that does not impose detachment and indifference towards the object of scientific investigation, requiring, on the contrary, an intimate participation and awareness of correspondences that exist between reality planes.

The speeches of the scientists invited to participate in the Eranos academic events had in common, as Eliade notes, precisely these elements that could contribute to the renewal of humanity. First of all, Eliade writes in the preface to *Spiritual Disciplines*, more and more researchers became aware of the importance of extending the dialogue between disciplines, of openness towards the spiritual treasures buried in the depth of modern man's consciousness. The communication path favoured is that of symbolic imagination: "At a certain moment, the members of Eranos felt that a new humanism could develop out of such encounters. Then, too, similar phenomena were beginning to appear elsewhere. It would be impossible in these few lines to depict an extremely complex cultural process, which, in addition, is very difficult to grasp since it is still *in status nascendi*. We will only say that at Ascona each speaker felt that his scientific creation acquired a new and deeper meaning in the degree to which he undertook to present it as a contribution to the knowledge of man. It was realised, too, that the new humanism that was here coming to birth could not be a replica of the old humanism. But there was something yet further, and perhaps yet more important. The research of depth psychologists, ethnologists, orientalists, and historians of religions had constantly brought out the human interest, the psychological «truth» and the spiritual value of countless symbols, myths, divine figures, and mystical techniques attested not only among Europeans and Asians but also among «primitives». Such human documents had previously been studied with the detachment and indifference with which nineteenth-century naturalists considered it proper to study insects. It now began to be realised that these documents express existential situations; that, consequently, they form part of the history of the human spirit. But the proper procedure for grasping the meaning of an existential situation is not the naturalist's «objectivity», but the intelligent sympathy of the hermeneut." [15]

In these years of the Eranos experience, Jung's personality intensifies the interior dialogue which permanently supported Eliade's effort of showing that the sacred exists in the very human consciousness, transforming the absurd of the profane existence into meanings which surpass the intentionality of a creator, coming from beyond it and participating in the movement of the others' inner life. In his turn, Jung was preoccupied with understanding the correspondences between the transcendent plane and the depth of the human psyche, being able, due to the collaboration with the physicist Wolfgang Pauli, to highlight the connections between the information of the extended consciousness and the organisation of matter. Eliade himself has shown the differences between the Jungian view on archetypes, orientated towards the unification of consciousness, and his own relation to the primordial structures, informed by the study of the sacred texts of mankind and by his own effort of coming to know "the techniques

of the concrete”, which he had the opportunity to experience due to “Indian pedagogy” [16].

The publication in 2009 of *The Red Book* sheds new light on the numinous experiences of Jung, which Eliade only knew fragmentarily, as his journal and the interview published in the *Combat* magazine in Paris, in 1952, show. It is exactly the significance of these experiences from beyond the self which influenced the way in which the two scholars related to their own creativity and scientific activity. These meanings indicate the elements which transcend the psychological contents of experiences, offering valuable information to the scholars fascinated with the complex architecture of the created world, with the ability of human consciousness to abolish time and causality.

Both Jung and Eliade’s work offer, we believe, a brilliant illustration of the manner in which the information of the zone of transparency sets into motion the creative potential of the consciousness which strives to unify the levels of reality through symbol. Significant, in this sense, are the passages from the eliadean *Journal* and those from *Liber Novus* in which the two scholars confess their bewilderment regarding the way in which their own creations possessed their author. The characters of Eliade’s fantastic prose seem to build their destiny beyond the will of the writer, who works without a plan, exploring the possibilities of non-action, only by looking carefully at the flow of inner life. Here is Eliade’s remarkable description of the genesis of his novel, *Noaptea de Sânziene (The Forbidden Forest)*: “All the secondary characters – secondary at the moment when I first saw them – gain an unexpected dignity when they face their death. Ștefan remains only a witness to all events as well as deaths; sometimes I see him as a connection agent between various groups of characters, passive subject of occurrences which – for the others – become destinies. But I wonder if the reader will realise the significance of the *witness* role played by Ștefan, witness in the way Dante saw it, descending in the Inferno, passing through the Purgatory, ascending afterwards to the Heavens – and listening, memorising and understanding the messages of these experiences. The reader might be disappointed – as in a way I am as well – by this apparently insignificant role of the main character, Ștefan. But his destiny as a witness and connection agent is chosen by Ștefan himself, beyond my will as an author.” [13, p. 254].

In the same way, Jung, following a different path from the one chosen by Eliade, is overwhelmed at times by the force of the archetypal images from the unconscious, which surface to express a different kind of truth. In an entry from 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1953, Eliade remembers, after a conversation with Mrs. Froebe, the fact that the meanings discovered by the Swiss scientist during the wanderings in the desert of his own self were not meant to be made public at that time. They remained hidden, to be offered much later, through the publication of *The Red Book*, to those fascinated by the Jungian view of the image of God in the West: “After being seriously ill, some five or six years ago, Jung tells Mrs Froebe: «it’s as if I’ve been in a valley full of diamonds and I was allowed to fill my pockets with diamonds, to carry them into my hands, as many as I could take – but no



more than that. I still have a few years to live, and I would like to say as much from what I understood then, when I was ill – but I realise that I can only express a small fraction, that I will only be able to show only one or two diamonds, although my pockets are full of them...» [13, p. 255]

Writing in *The Red Book* about his effort to assimilate his shadow in order to overcome the spiritual alienation of his own historical moment, Jung emphasises the importance of the discoveries which he makes by experiencing the contents of the unconscious in order to discover the “supersense”, the one which is “the path, the road, the bridge which is to come” [17]. By experimenting with his own self, by observing “the strange plants” which appear when “the desert” of his own soul “begins to bear fruit”, the Swiss scholar, like Eliade, points to the possibility of creating a new man, who finds in the depths of the history of his being the miracle of transformation [17, p. 267]. After 1928, thanks to his encounter with the Taoist alchemical text *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, through which he becomes aware of the connection between his visions and the meaning of these sacred writings, Jung sets out to offer, through the results of his research, a new communication path between the East and the West.

Observing, like Eliade, the signs “of the rupture of the plane” [9, p. 236], Jung formulates, in collaboration with the physicist Wolfgang Pauli the theory of synchronicity, which affirms the participation of the inner world in the organisation of the reality outside the subject. As he states in Eliade’s interview in 1952, synchronicity entails “the rupture of time ‘a’ it closely resembles numinous experiences where space, time and causality are abolished” [18]. Unlike Jung, whose thought “was hanging at the gates of the kingdom of the unconscious” [12, p. 110], as Basarab Nicolescu remarks, Pauli structures his philosophical ideas mainly through his intellect. Recognising the difficulty of the Westerners to accept the Eastern idea of a ‘super-personal cosmic consciousness’, which creates the impression of the absence of the object for the moderns, Pauli notes the remarkable impact which the theory of the unconscious had on the understanding of the correspondences between the subject and the object of knowledge. Looked at from this perspective, the relationships between the surface structures of consciousness and the uncontrollable processes from the depths of the psyche highlight ‘paradoxical characteristics, similar to those we encounter in Physics’. Thus, on the one hand, ‘modern psychology proves the objective reality of the unconscious’, which interferes with everything belonging to the sphere of the surface structures of consciousness. Pauli stresses that this “limits the objective character of the reality of the unconscious and endows reality with a certain degree of subjectivity” showing that “both the human spirit and the object perceived as being outside the human being are subject to the same cosmic order” [19].

The manner in which Eliade understands and builds his destiny after his return from India seems to confirm Pauli’s observations. The young scholar who set out towards a mysterious land of true stories, searching for the experience of the Absolute returns, as he confesses to Arşavir Acterian in 1933, “with a thirst

for relativities” [20]. Eliade was then convinced of the necessity of creating, through culture, a new spiritual synthesis which can provide an answer to the new challenges generated by the fact that the extra-European cultures were on the point of ‘entering history’. Acterian added in the interview conducted by Mircea Handoca that Eliade would explain, in a letter to Barbu Brezianu from 9th January 1979, how he felt about his decision to leave India: „ ...I didn’t stay in India any longer simply because that absolute, about which journalists emphatically wrote in the years between 1933-1940, had fallen into desuetude, more precisely, lived and identified with the infinite experiences history was preparing for us as they were required by the *Zeitgeist* which I, among very few people, had felt ever since 1940... Convinced that Asia would enter history again and that the absolute (initiatic, soteriological gnosis) would be occulted in India and the Far East, I have chosen the other way, that of culture, of creativity and hermeneutics. I think I was right. Condemned to decipher the mysteries and discover the path to salvation through culture, through books ( not by means of oral traditions, by initiatic transmission from master to disciple), we had nothing better to do than to follow the depth of the mysterious *coincidentia oppositorum*, which allows us not only to discover the sacred camouflaged in the profane, but also to resacralise the historical moment, to transfigure it by creating its transcendental dimension (or intention).” [20]

In tone with the scientific discoveries of the times and with the knowledge ‘eternal India’ offered him, Eliade will in his turn insist upon the unification of the structures of consciousness so that the human being can exist first and foremost as a relationship, as a presence which, being in a continuous transformation, participates in the movement of the entire Cosmos.

#### **4. Exposure to American otherness**

After the Eranos experience, Eliade is offered the opportunity to continue his research at the University of Chicago. Although after 1962, the year of Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn’s death, Eliade does not participate in the Eranos conferences, the ideas that animated the Ascona encounters are taken further by the Romanian scientist and integrated in the cultural project of the new humanism. In so doing, Eliade articulates a new methodology, „the royal path of creative hermeneutics”, which would also ensure the cooperation of scientists, serving the aim of unifying knowledge [21].

Therefore, the spiritual synthesis Eliade hoped humanity would actualize at global scale and which he struggled to achieve through his own will at the level of his personal existence implies satisfying modern man’s thirst for meaning, which can be achieved through the encounter with the archaic and extra-European cultures. Relying excessively on the intellect alone separates the subject from the object of knowledge, reducing reality to the world of matter. In this long-awaited reconciliation and dialogue between diverse cultures and fields of knowledge it is fundamental to understand an essential characteristic of all natural systems, irrespective of the level of reality to which they belong: their

openness, which allows continuous transformation, thriving on the correspondences that exist between the different reality planes.

Indeed, as Florin Ţurcanu also explains in *Mircea Eliade Prisoner of History*, after 1945, the Romanian historian of religions intensifies his preoccupation for integrating in his work the “manifestations and creations of modernity” [22]. His intellectual and editorial contacts diversify, indicating an orientation that assimilates traditionalist ideas at a different level. Eliade begins to consider himself a Trojan Horse of *Philosophia Perennis* in the world of science. More and more frequently Eliade writes in his *Journal* commentaries on the way in which objective science reflects universal truths revealed by the religious traditions of humanity. The Romanian historian of religions expresses his satisfaction generated by the existence of scientific proof highlighting the coherence of reality levels. However, he insists on the need to identify solutions for the problems generated by lack of communication between scientists and the specialists of the sacred: “Now we meet the principle of *coincidentia oppositorum* in certain principles of Nuclear physics, but the same question comes up at our moment in history: How is liberty possible in a conditioned universe? How can one live in history without betraying it, without denying it, and still partake of a transhistorical reality? Ultimately, the real problem is this: How to recognize the real camouflaged in appearances? I’m waiting for a Buddhist philosopher to present us with a total vision of the real.” [23]

As it is revealed in this passage, beyond the ambition to be appreciated as a man of science, about which Florin Ţurcanu writes in his book about Eliade [22, p. 494], the Romanian historian of religions was motivated by his profound understanding of epiphanic knowledge which results in ‘emerging out of oneself’, in becoming ‘a witness’ through which important sacred messages are transmitted [13, p. 254]. Thus, Eliade comes to further explore the dynamics of the actualization and potentialization of events, which he studied from a different perspective during his Indian experience. Identifying the real with the sacred, which is defined as ‘a structure of consciousness’, Eliade highlights the importance of intentionality in religious experience and its permanent interaction with the structures of the physical world.

There are correspondences between the infinitely large and the infinitely small, as the philosophical thought of specialists in quantum physics has come to acknowledge, revealing the extension of human consciousness to different levels of reality. Considering the fact that Eliade was familiarized with and believed in the transformative impact of quantum physics developments, it can be said that the eliadean view of the ontology of the sacred reflects the belief in the capacity of human consciousness to structure reality. In 1959, Eliade comments in his *Journal* on the remarkable courage of mathematicians and physicists who explored the complex organization of energy in subatomic particles: “...how much I admired – and envied the mathematicians and physicists of today: their intellectual courage, their daring. They have no fear of contradicting themselves, nor of formulating contradictory judgements on the structures of the real.” [23, p. 47] Seven years later, in 1966, Eliade writes again about the connections that

he identified between Quantum physics discoveries and the 'cipher' revealed by the religious traditions of humanity: "I'm reading, in an article by Jean Charon: «Man is equally in touch with another milieu: contemporary Physics teaches us in fact that the elementary particles which constitute all matter must not be considered as separate from the rest of the Cosmos, but as objects which, notably by what is called their field (gravitational, electromagnetic or nuclear field) are coextensive with the whole Universe. Man too, like all matter, is naturally manufactured from these particles which are coextensive with the whole Universe; and therefore man is, in a certain way, in union with the entire Cosmos surrounding him. He is in constant connection with what could be called the cosmic milieu.» This is ultimately the fundamental belief of the primitives. But not only of the primitives: Indian philosophy has been developed and articulated on the basis of similar premises (based, obviously, on a millennial experience)." [23, p. 286]

The Romanian scientist's insistence on the scientific basis of the new humanism illustrates the configuration of a cultural project which, in connection with the cosmological models promoted by modern science, might develop in the direction of exploring new dimensions of existence. This component of the Eliadean research and creative endeavour has the potential to explain many ambiguities of Eliade's reference to the sacred and the ideal of human being's cosmicization. Therefore, the new *Homo symbolicus*, whose experience is enriched by the progress of modern science, can remember to live in a world that is transparent and meaningful, which offers infinite paths through which one's destiny can be fulfilled and absolute freedom conquered.

The religions that reduce the sacred to a social function, the sciences limited to the objective description of the created world become petrified, generating spiritual sterility. Imitating the 'gesture of nature', Eliade's cultural project of the new humanism can be actualized by becoming aware of the beauty of the flow of life in each component of the relationship between the human being, the transcendent plane of existence and the level of the profane world. From this perspective, the permanent transformation of the creations of the spirit reflected in art, science and in the religious experience of *homo symbolicus* opens to a different dimension, where each of them becomes a source of inspiration for the other ones. Above all, Eliade points out, this new way of being in the world implies awareness of the fact that every human being already has the information of the Centre, which he or she only has to bring to the surface in every thought an deed, celebrating in this manner the harmony of Totality.

Eliade observes the new laboratory of creation that is beginning to transform humanity bearing in mind, in addition to the meanings revealed by the religious symbolism that he studied as a historian of religions, the fascinating quantum epistemologies. Through this exposure to the amazing symmetry between scientific thought and the message of the sacred camouflaged in religious phenomena, Eliade highlights the necessity of investigating human consciousness with new scientific tools and spiritual attitudes. As Heisenberg says, "what we

observe is not nature in itself but nature exposed to our methods of questioning” [24]. In the same way, the sacred texts of humanity reveal that extended human consciousness structures reality, becoming more than just a ‘self’ separated from the rest of the created world. Consciousness is continuous flow, which can be purified and brought to the state of absolute freedom, transcending conceptual activity.

In the light of all these complex scientific preoccupations demonstrated by the Romanian historian of religions, it is obvious that Eliade oriented his effort in the direction of the new path to ‘gordianic knowledge’, which, Eliade explains, represents “a special type of knowledge which has played a considerable part in the history of mankind’s spirituality”. This means “neglecting or ignoring absolutely all previous attempts to solve a problem in order to find a solution *outside* it, starting from different data, using alternative instruments of investigation, considering another total vision of the world”. There are many signs, Eliade concludes, which reveal the fact that “gordianic knowledge will dominate our times” [25].

## **5. The architecture of mythical prose**

As if reflecting the complex organisation of the natural systems, each character or epic centre from the eliadean literary works exists through the correspondences which the author identifies between the plane of his scientific research, the level of ‘efficient’ philosophy, with roots in the depths of life, and the historical plane of the events endowed with hierophanic potential: “I think the moral and the philosophy of a great modern writer, who would wish to mirror within his work the effort of knowing the present, can no longer be satisfied with the lessons of the natural sciences which were in vogue during Gide’s youth. He will have to take into account everything a Heisenberg, a Ueskull, a Heidegger, a Frobenius have revealed – and especially everything which the discovery of the archaic worlds, of the myths and of the symbols can reveal” [12, p. 22].

Eliade specifies in his interviews that he does not particularly wish to illustrate through his art the information contained within his scientific studies [26]. Confident in imagination’s power to transform consciousness, he decides to write only when he is ‘inspired’. In the light of these observations, we will approach the system of the eliadean literary texts bearing in mind the spiritual synthesis which, in the post-war years, Eliade will associate with the cultural project of the new humanism.

Reflecting the multivalence of religious symbolism, Eliade’s mythical stories are open to many levels of interpretation. We will attempt in our paper to point to a new research path, revealed by the simultaneity of meanings, without exhaustively highlighting the significances and spiritual resources towards which these may lead a reader. Every word in the eliadean literary text opens to meanings which the level of ‘the common language’, from the world of history and time, cannot encompass. Thus, the writer emphasises the unifying function

of the symbolic words, which have a significant impact upon all the structures of the human consciousness. The language of existence in time and history is a creation of the profane mind, which tends to enclose everything in a single meaning, that of the finitude of the human condition. Through his mythical prose, Eliade creates his own cipher which reflects the transcendent dimension of existence, dissolving, like myth, the concrete world of time and space. His characters live 'vertically', always looking for correspondences between the cosmic levels, so that each component of their participation in history can lead them to the understanding of the unifying meaning of life.

Let us observe, in what follows, the forms which come into being in the eliadean imaginary universe, organising themselves according to their own logic, that of the symbol. Ever since adolescence, Eliade writes in his *Autobiography*, the miracle of matter fascinated him, determining him to search, beyond the immediate use of substances, for the laws which govern the transmutation of man and of the entire Cosmos with the help of the Philosopher's Stone [27]. Reflecting on the significance of these writings from his youth, Eliade remarks the fact that, when carried away by imagination, his consciousness integrated through symbols the information of a new way of being in the world, that of man who transforms nature, interacting first of all with its spiritual dimension.

For two years, between 1921 and 1923, Eliade works on *Memoriile unui soldat de plumb (Memoirs of a Lead Soldier)*, in which the young writer takes further his ideas about the miracle of Creation and about the purpose of man in the world. The story of the lead soldier, also written in the first person, opens with the bitter reflections of the protagonist on the fall of the human being [6, p. 46, 584]. 'The bit of metal', for which the expansion of the universe and the succession of the cosmic events are in resonance with the harmony of the created world, lives in a different time than that of man, knowing all the meanings of these transformations. But man is lost in time, pursuing his 'meaningless sciences', because people have chosen to fragment knowledge, forgetting the correspondences which exist between being and non-being, between life and death: "Well! This I cannot stand. How? Even after having discovered so many things, the weight of suns, the speed of light, the ethereal vibrations, the curvature of the descendants from the Monera, can they claim that we are lifeless?! Such narrow view I have never seen." [7, p. 395]

On the other hand, "the foremost reason" for which the protagonist "unfolds his life in his mind" is the hope that, through the power of man, he will be turned to gold, thus succeeding in passing again beyond the profane time actualized in the moment of Creation. Although the lead soldier "is saddened" by man's way of being in the world, he believes in the gift with which man was endowed by "the Man in the Sky", in the power of the extended consciousness due to which the human being is "close to victory" [7, p. 396].

Unlike people's knowledge of the birth of the universe and of the life that glows within it, the first moments of the genesis were laden with beauty and joy, because the whole of nature is animated and every part of it is connected to the others through love. Back then, at the beginning of the world, being coincided

with non-being. Beings were actually souls which did not know the constraints of form, existing in more states simultaneously, enjoying the game of their permanent transformation: "I was in seven galleries and I was also in none of them, but in all seven. And at that time there were no clocks, we hadn't anything to do with them, but we knew what was happening outside and what time it was, not in the way people knew it, but differently. Because we are born from the universe, from heavenly flesh and within our beings there is something which makes us eternal and all-knowing." [7, p. 397]

While playing, the particles of lead enter a cloud from which they are not able to escape and thus their history in the world of men begins. Human existence unfolds under the sign of fear, of destruction and death, but the metals know that 'the meaning of the entire Cosmos' is to be revealed through the movement of man's consciousness. The most beautiful night in the existence of the lead soldier is that in which a child sings "sadly while gazing at the sky", leaving the piece of metal on the edge of the well, in "the wonderful rumble" of the cedars. After the boy's song, the whole nature begins to "weave its melodies", seemingly celebrating the beauty of all the creations of the spirit, which exist "only for life to start again", following their path to fulfilment [7, p. 423].

As it was never completed, this work from Eliade's youth does not guide the reader towards meanings which can be clearly defined. But we can note the fact that Eliade was preoccupied with the mystery of the links between different natural systems, looking, like Goethe, for the structure which can unify all the cosmic planes.

Guided by the impulse to overcome the fragmentation of knowledge, Eliade gradually discovers that each 'mental film' from which a mythical story is created represents at the same time an important opening towards the significance of authentic existence. Thus, the play entitled *The Comedy of Death*, which he wrote under the influence of 'Indian pedagogy', confronts the young scholar with the descending movement of the sacred, which limits itself in the profane, waiting to be recognized by the human being who chooses to look for "the exit from the self" [20, p. 11]. Writing *The Snake*, in 1937, Eliade highlights for himself and for his readers the message of the unrecognisability of the miracle [27, p. 321]. Gradually, with each sign of 'the camouflaging of the sacred in the profane', Eliade shows through the imaginary universe of his novels and stories that man takes part, beyond individuality, in the mystery of the entire creation, which makes each manifestation of the sacred familiar, a serene embrace of the worlds.

In the post-war period, after the confrontation with the challenges from the labyrinth of his own existence, Eliade sees in a different light the works of art which, even 'without the will' of those who created them, hide meanings which can produce mutations in modern man's consciousness. "The simple person" of the eliadean mythical texts aims to reintegrate himself in the totality of the cosmic levels "by passing into the others", building a destiny which can

revive the connection between the human soul and the divine order of the creations of the spirit [28].

We also notice how Eliade's interest in the dialogue between the exact sciences and religion leaves its mark on the way in which the mythical story is centred on the power of the human consciousness to shape reality. There is a mysterious solidarity, according to the protagonists of the eliadean literary texts, between the inner life of man and the labyrinth of the world, whose meandering movement is meant to awaken the soul, to help it 'see', beyond appearances, the transparency of the world. This is the message which Biriş, the theorist of the fall in time from *The Forbidden Forest*, must give Ileana, the Angel of Death: "There, in the maze, I felt obtruded on all sides, As if I had been imprisoned in a gigantic metal sphere. I thought I no longer was in the whale's belly, but inside a great metal sphere. I couldn't see its edges anywhere, but I felt hopelessly locked inside it. And yet, one day, almost without knowing it, I broke its shell and I came out, like hatching from a huge egg. [...] Tell her that the car does exist, that the windows exist, that this sphere in which we are enclosed is only in appearance made out of steel, in reality it is broken in countless places, it is like a piece of egg-shell, broken in all directions." [29]

There is, within each element of nature, even in the objects from the desacralised space of the city, a calling which those endowed with imagination can follow, perceiving the splendour of the existence of worlds in simultaneity, in the eternal present. Here is the explanation provided by Ştefan Viziru, the 'witness' character, who transmits the sacred message which informs the consciousness freed from the constraints of personal memory: "In fact, I wasn't painting anything in particular. I would simply take the brush and start painting. It's hard to explain. I felt a great calm, almost bliss. As if it wasn't I, the ordinary self. It surfaced, from somewhere in the depths of my being, a different me, the real one, without worry, without desire, without even memories. This thing impressed me in particular, the fact that while painting I had no memories anymore. I saw, felt and thought all sorts of things, but it was as if they were not mine, they didn't come from my past. While painting, I had no past. I lived in a different way than living in my house, or the ministry, or on the street. I was living in the present, like the saints." [29, p. 68]

Moreover, says Ştefan, all the paintings are on 'one and the same canvas', the true gateway to the other world which opens in the sacred space of the Sambo room. The painting, the forbidden chamber, the forest and the car are all integrated into a system of correspondences under the sign of the sphere, of the labyrinth. Understanding the link between these elements allows the realization of the fact that man can choose the way to absolute freedom.

The characters point, through their speech and behaviour, to the endless possibilities of their existence, to expectations with roots in the very heart of being. The past and the present overlap, the present bringing experiences which are the consequence of a way of being which will probably be actualised through an initiatic experience. Eliade's hero rebuilds himself almost playfully, taking part in events which not only contain the past and the present, but also the future.



Reflecting the coexistence of the point and the vibration in Hindu philosophy [8, p. 207], the character whose consciousness begins to awaken is at the same time dead and alive, within time and in eternity. The neophyte dissolves in the connections that he makes with the other events of the created world which, through the meaning that informs them, are similar to a melody integrating itself in the harmony of the universal symphony.

The Russian soldier from the novella *Ivan*, the stranger who becomes 'The Unknown God' for Darie, the philosopher, transmits to the hopeless ones the message of immortality. Wandering in a world of fighting and fragmentation, Darie finds out that, beyond meaning and counter-meaning, there is the sacred information of the Logos, of the blessing which frees the soul captive in the endless spinning of the worlds:

“– What I didn't understand, Ivan continued, was your hopelessness, mister philosopher, your fear that you would never rest. But why do you want to rest: We have just begun. What do we have behind us? Maybe not even a million years, and still! But if we start counting from homo sapiens, there are only some tens of thousands of years. And look ahead: billions and billions of years...

Darie listened to him surprised and concentrated.

– Billions of years, he repeated in a whisper. I know, I know, but what can we do with them, with these billions of years?

– We can animate the earth and then the solar system and then the galaxies and everything that might be out there, and which we are yet to know. Let us bring them into existence and awaken the spirit which lies alienated in every life. Let us bless the entire Creation, as some of you like to say.” [30]

This is the “secret of the human condition”, hidden in the formulation “a series of mutually contradictory evidence” [30, p. 321], the message which highlights the connections between the cosmic levels. Ivan's mystery is that of the extended consciousness from which the forms of the events in the created world are born. This also reveals the symmetry of the eliadean philosophical thought with the theory of the physicist David Bohm regarding the role of active information at quantum level. The explicit order, which governs the macrophysical world can only be understood by relating to its roots in the reality of the implicit order from the plane of the small infinite, a dimension of the potentialities which actualise “the relatively stable and independent forms” of the events from the created world [31].

Thus, the man enticed by appearances, whose mind searches for the guiding line towards the exit from the labyrinth will have to remember the law of the eternal return, which brings the joy of existing in harmony with the cosmic rhythms. The path which sets man free from the absurd nightmare of historical events is revealed, as Eliade shows, joining the effort of the most famous scientists of the XX<sup>th</sup> century, through understanding the fact that what is apparently fragmented and foreign participates in the continuous making of the profound fabric of the entire Universe.

## 6. Conclusions

Interpreting Mircea Eliade's work from a transdisciplinary perspective, we have considered it necessary to recontextualise the cultural legacy offered by Mircea Eliade so as to highlight the manner in which the cultural project created by the Romanian scholar is relevant for the way in which humanity is presently transforming. In this sense, we considered it useful to ask ourselves more questions regarding the elements due to which Eliade's work is an important reference point for the researchers who, attempting to respond to the challenges of the contemporary world, are more and more preoccupied with the identification of the connection between the structures of the human consciousness and the enigma of the laws which govern the entire Creation.

We have noted that, insisting upon the values of mystery and difference, highlighting the idea of the reconciliation between science, art and religion, Eliade proves how important it is to increase awareness of the responsibility that every human being has concerning the reality mirrored and structured through every consciousness. Mircea Eliade offers a cultural project whose complexity is seen in a different light, especially due to the transdisciplinary methodology which, starting from the concept of the reality level, is based on logic, ontology and epistemology as well. Thus, more and more researchers from around the world have the chance to make use of the eliadean intuitions within the frame of new research projects that belong to a different laboratory of creation, which could this time be part of integral man's way of being in the world.

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