

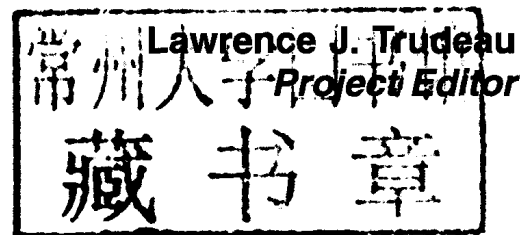
Twentieth-Century
Literary Criticism

TCLC 243

Volume 243

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

**Criticism of the
Works of Novelists, Poets, Playwrights,
Short Story Writers, and Other Creative Writers
Who Lived between 1900 and 1999,
from the First Published Critical
Appraisals to Current Evaluations**



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Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism, Vol. 243

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Farmington Hills, MI, 48331-3535

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ISBN-13: 978-1-4144-5801-4
ISBN-10: 1-4144-5801-0

ISSN 0276-8178

Preface

Since its inception *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism (TCLC)* has been purchased and used by some 10,000 school, public, and college or university libraries. *TCLC* has covered more than 1000 authors, representing over 60 nationalities and nearly 50,000 titles. No other reference source has surveyed the critical response to twentieth-century authors and literature as thoroughly as *TCLC*. In the words of one reviewer, “there is nothing comparable available.” *TCLC* “is a gold mine of information—dates, pseudonyms, biographical information, and criticism from books and periodicals—which many librarians would have difficulty assembling on their own.”

Scope of the Series

TCLC is designed to serve as an introduction to authors who died between 1900 and 1999 and to the most significant interpretations of these author’s works. Volumes published from 1978 through 1999 included authors who died between 1900 and 1960. The great poets, novelists, short story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of the period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. In organizing and reprinting the vast amount of critical material written on these authors, *TCLC* helps students develop valuable insight into literary history, promotes a better understanding of the texts, and sparks ideas for papers and assignments. Each entry in *TCLC* presents a comprehensive survey on an author’s career or an individual work of literature and provides the user with a multiplicity of interpretations and assessments. Such variety allows students to pursue their own interests; furthermore, it fosters an awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

Every fourth volume of *TCLC* is devoted to literary topics. These topics widen the focus of the series from the individual authors to such broader subjects as literary movements, prominent themes in twentieth-century literature, literary reaction to political and historical events, significant eras in literary history, prominent literary anniversaries, and the literatures of cultures that are often overlooked by English-speaking readers.

TCLC is designed as a companion series to Gale’s *Contemporary Literary Criticism, (CLC)* which reprints commentary on authors who died after 1999. Because of the different time periods under consideration, there is no duplication of material between *CLC* and *TCLC*.

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A *TCLC* entry consists of the following elements:

- The **Author Heading** cites the name under which the author most commonly wrote, followed by birth and death dates. Also located here are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose native languages use nonroman alphabets. If the author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym is listed in the author heading and the author’s actual name is given in parenthesis on the first line of the biographical and critical information. Uncertain birth or death dates are indicated by question marks. Single-work entries are preceded by a heading that consists of the most common form of the title in English translation (if applicable) and the name of its author.
- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The genre and publication date of each work is given. In the case of foreign authors whose

works have been translated into English, the English-language version of the title follows in brackets. Unless otherwise indicated, dramas are dated by first performance, not first publication. Lists of **Representative Works** by different authors appear with topic entries.

- Reprinted **Criticism** is arranged chronologically in each entry to provide a useful perspective on changes in critical evaluation over time. The critic's name and the date of composition or publication of the critical work are given at the beginning of each piece of criticism. Unsigned criticism is preceded by the title of the source in which it originally appeared. All titles by the author featured in the text are printed in boldface type. Footnotes are reprinted at the end of each essay or excerpt. In the case of excerpted criticism, only those footnotes that pertain to the excerpted texts are included. Criticism in topic entries is arranged chronologically under a variety of subheadings to facilitate the study of different aspects of the topic.
- A complete **Bibliographical Citation** of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism. Source citations in the Literary Criticism Series follow University of Chicago Press style, as outlined in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003).
- Critical essays are prefaced by brief **Annotations** explicating each piece.
- An annotated bibliography of **Further Reading** appears at the end of each entry and suggests resources for additional study. In some cases, significant essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights are included here. Boxed material following the further reading list provides references to other biographical and critical sources on the author in series published by Gale.

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A **Cumulative Author Index** lists all of the authors that appear in a wide variety of reference sources published by Gale, including *TCLC*. A complete list of these sources is found facing the first page of the Author Index. The index also includes birth and death dates and cross references between pseudonyms and actual names.

A **Cumulative Topic Index** lists the literary themes and topics treated in *TCLC* as well as other Literature Criticism series.

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In response to numerous suggestions from librarians, Gale also produces a paperbound edition of the *TCLC* cumulative title index. This annual cumulation, which alphabetically lists all titles reviewed in the series, is available to all customers. Additional copies of this index are available upon request. Librarians and patrons will welcome this separate index; it saves shelf space, is easy to use, and is recyclable upon receipt of the next edition.

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When citing criticism reprinted in the Literary Criticism Series, students should provide complete bibliographic information so that the cited essay can be located in the original print or electronic source. Students who quote directly from reprinted criticism may use any accepted bibliographic format, such as University of Chicago Press style or Modern Language Association (MLA) style. Both the MLA and the University of Chicago formats are acceptable and recognized as being the current standards for citations. It is important, however, to choose one format for all citations; do not mix the two formats within a list of citations.

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Kuester, Martin. "Myth and Postmodernist Turn in Canadian Short Fiction: Sheila Watson, 'Antigone' (1959)." In *The Canadian Short Story: Interpretations*, edited by Reginald M. Nischik, pp. 163-74. Rochester, N.Y.: Camden House, 2007. Reprinted in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*. Vol. 206, edited by Thomas J. Schoenberg and Lawrence J. Trudeau, 227-32. Detroit: Gale, 2008.

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Mircea Eliade

1907-1986

Romanian novelist, essayist, short story writer, diarist, and autobiographer.

The following entry provides an overview of Eliade's life and works. For additional information on his career, see *CLC*, Volume 19.

INTRODUCTION

Eliade was one of the most renowned scholars of religion of the twentieth century, as well as a significant novelist and short story writer in his native country of Romania. In his major critical works, including *Le mythe de l'éternel retour* (1949; *The Myth of the Eternal Return*) and *Das Heilige und das Profane* (1957; *The Sacred and the Profane*), Eliade studied the interaction between humanity and the divine in a variety of cultures and considered questions related to human perceptions of time, space, and history, as well as the significance of myth, symbol, and ritual in religious experience. In addition to his substantial body of scholarly work, Eliade also produced important works of fiction, most notably his autobiographical novels, *Maitreyi* (1933; *Bengal Nights*) and *Intoarcerea din rai* (1934), and what critics regard as his fictional masterpiece, *Fôret interdite* (1955; *The Forbidden Forest*), which revisits themes explored in the author's critical essays. Although he is known primarily for his scholarly works outside his home country, some critics have suggested that Eliade's fiction offers the best introduction to his thought and thematic preoccupations. Others have argued, however, that his writings must be viewed in their entirety to appreciate their consistent and cohesive treatment of human experience and spirituality. Today, Eliade remains an influential thinker of the twentieth century, respected for his imaginative works of fiction as well as his groundbreaking critical inquiries into what he called "*homo religiosus*," or "religious man," which helped shape the study of religious thought.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Eliade was born March 9, 1907, in Bucharest, Romania, to Ioana Stoian Vasile and Gheorghe Eliade, an army officer. After moving several times to accommodate his father's military career, Eliade and his family finally settled in Bucharest in 1914, shortly after the outbreak

of World War I. In Bucharest Eliade attended the highly acclaimed Spiru-Haret high school, where he developed a strong interest in the natural sciences. A prolific reader, the author spent many hours alone in the attic of his house, pursuing various subjects on his own, and wrote several original articles, some of which were published in *Jurnalul stiintelor populare* in 1921. In 1923 Eliade began writing an autobiographical novel recounting his adolescent years, titled "Romanul adolescentului miop," parts of which were published in periodicals several years later. In 1925 he was admitted to the University of Bucharest and graduated magna cum laude in 1928.

Eliade produced several critical studies during the late 1920s, including a series of twelve essays, "Itinerariu spiritual, I-XII," published in *Cuvântul* in the fall of 1927, which addressed contemporary issues and concerns of his generation. During this time, he also developed an interest in Eastern culture and practices, and in 1928 he was awarded a five-year grant to pursue his interest in Indian philosophy and study with Surendranath Dasgupta, a Cambridge-educated Yoga scholar, in Calcutta. He continued to write and produced his first novels, including *Isabel si apele Diavolului* (1930), *Bengal Nights*, and *Lumina ce se stinge* (1934). Eliade briefly considered becoming a monk in the Himalayas to pursue the practice of Yoga, but after receiving a summons to perform his military service, he returned home to Romania on Christmas Eve, 1931. The following year, with several friends and colleagues, Eliade founded the Criterion Association for Arts, Literature and Philosophy in Bucharest, a cultural organization that prefigured the existentialist movement in France.

In 1933 Eliade was awarded a Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Bucharest. He continued to write, and over the next few years published several works, including *Intoarcerea din rai*; a scientific essay titled *Alchimie Asiatica* (1935); another novel, *Santier* (1935); and *Huliganii* (1935), the sequel to *Intoarcerea din rai*. In the late 1930s political tensions in Romania mounted. Eliade, suspected of sympathizing with the right-wing Iron Guard movement, was arrested in 1938 and spent time in a detention camp at Miercurea-Ciuc. He was able to return to Bucharest later that year and continued to write, producing the play *Iphigenia* (1941) and two novellas, *Secretul Doctorului Honigberger* and *Nopti la Serampore*, which were published together in 1940 and later translated and collected under the title *Two Tales of the Occult*.

During the 1940s Eliade served as a cultural attaché to the Romanian Legation in England. When diplomatic ties between the two countries were cut, however, the author was sent to Portugal, where he remained until 1945. During World War II Eliade was able to return to Bucharest one last time before the country was drawn into the Soviet sphere of influence. After the war he decided that returning to his home country would be suicide. Shortly thereafter, he obtained a French visa and traveled to Paris. In addition to several works of nonfiction, Eliade produced one of his most respected novels, *The Forbidden Forest*, during this time.

Eliade traveled extensively during the 1950s, delivering lectures and attending conferences abroad, and in 1956 he accepted a professorship at the University of Chicago. During the 1960s and 1970s Eliade continued to travel and write, producing several important studies of religion and mythology, as well as fiction and an autobiography, *Amintiri: I. Mansarda* (1966), which was later translated into English and published in two volumes. The last years of his life were dedicated to research, writing, and travel, and to completing his last major work of religious scholarship, a multi-volume study of world religion titled *Histoire des croyances et des idées religieuses* (1976-83; *A History of Religious Ideas*). He retired from the University of Chicago in 1983. Eliade died three years later, on April 22, 1986, in Chicago.

MAJOR WORKS

Eliade devoted much of his career to scholarly research and the production of a significant body of critical work covering a range of topics, including Indian religions, Asiatic alchemy, religious myth and symbol, and the relationship of the sacred and profane in human experience. Works such as *The Sacred and the Profane*, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, and *Traité d'histoire des religions* (1949; *Patterns in Comparative Religion*) are considered fundamental studies in the field of religious history, which collectively provide insight into the religious practices of cultures from a wide range of nations and time periods. Humankind's perception of reality is a primary concern within Eliade's scholarship, particularly with regard to the differences between the religious and nonreligious individual, which he equates with archaic or traditional cultures and modern, historical society, respectively.

In *The Sacred and the Profane*, the author argued that the religious person perceives humanity and the world as sacred, while the nonreligious man or woman denies the existence of the sacred in everyday life. He further asserted that an individual could recognize the sacred only after something beyond nature revealed itself, and

therefore the history of religion could be characterized as a series of "manifestations of sacred realities." According to Eliade's argument, the nonreligious individual refuses transcendence but continues to be haunted by the existence of the sacred reality. In *The Sacred and the Profane*, as well as *The Myth of the Eternal Return* and *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, Eliade was concerned with the religious individual's conception of sacred spaces. As sites where the sacred has manifested, these spaces, according to the author, become gateways for communication with the sacred. He referred to these sacred manifestations as "hierophanies."

The human perception of time is also an important theme that Eliade explored in his scholarly works, particularly as it relates to myth, ritual, and history. In *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, he maintained that while some cultures explained time as history, or a linear progression from the past to an unknown future, other cultures viewed time as "cosmos," or an infinitely repeatable cycle initiated through ritual and ceremonies that are preserved in myth. Through patterns of destruction and regeneration, existence acquires significance and meaning for those cultures that adopt the cyclical view of time. Those who accept linear time, however, are trapped in history, living in terror through a series of meaningless events.

Although Eliade is primarily remembered among English-language readers for his scholarly works, his fiction has drawn increasing critical attention in recent decades. At the beginning of his literary career Eliade drew mainly from his own experiences and employed material from his journals and diaries in the construction of his fiction. His first novel, *Isabel si apele Diavolului*, for instance, deals primarily with the author's preoccupation with overcoming sterility, or the inability to create, and preserving personal freedom in an effort to achieve immortality. One of his most successful early novels, *Bengal Nights*, is based on the author's romantic affair with Maitreyi, a poet and the daughter of Yoga scholar Surendranath Dasgupta. In the novel, the protagonist, Alain, is a young French engineer working in Calcutta, where he becomes fascinated with the people and culture of India. After falling ill, Alain is invited to convalesce in the home of his superior, Narendra Sen. During his recovery he falls in love with Sen's sixteen-year-old daughter, Maitreyi. Alain and Maitreyi engage in an illicit affair but are eventually betrayed by Maitreyi's sister, after which Alain is banished from the household. The Indian landscape is featured prominently in *Bengal Nights*, and as some scholars have observed, the awakening consciousness of the author/protagonist to a drastically different culture serves as a primary theme of the work.

After achieving some success with the autobiographical novel genre, Eliade began to experiment with form and address themes to which he would return throughout his

career. The formally complex novel *Intoarcerea din rai* represents a significant departure from the author's early successes and incorporates a myriad of literary techniques, including stream of consciousness narration and an original, sophisticated style. In this work Eliade considered the prominent concerns of his generation, including the radical changes brought about by historical events and the loss of an idyllic past. *Huliganii*, the sequel to *Intoarcerea din rai*, treats themes related to creativity and freedom. The "hooligans" to which the title of the work refers are a group of enthusiastic young individuals, who reject rigid traditions and conventions and pursue personal freedom as a means to unleash and explore their creativity. Fully believing in their own power, these individuals perceive creative expression as a means through which they can triumph over history.

As Eliade continued to experiment with fiction, he increasingly blended fantastic and realistic elements in his novels and incorporated the religious and mythic themes of his scholarly research. *Secretul Doctorului Honigberger*, the first of two novellas collected in *Two Tales of the Occult* and translated as *The Secret of Dr. Honigberger*, centers on the disappearance of a respected Romanian physician, who vanishes after experimenting with yogic techniques in his quest for Shambhala, an invisible kingdom in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. The doctor's notes, a blend of scientific and spiritual research, are discovered by an investigator and reveal his belief that Europe would soon suffer the fate of Atlantis, disappearing forever. Finally, the house where the notes were found also disappears, leaving the investigator without solid proof and only his memory of the event. The fixed nature of time and space is also questioned in the second novella of the collection, *Nopti la Serampore (Nights at Serampore)*. In this work three European scholars traveling in the forests of Bengal are mysteriously cast into another time and space, where they witness the murder of a young Hindu wife that occurred one hundred and fifty years in the past.

Generally considered Eliade's most successful novel, *The Forbidden Forest* primarily takes place in Bucharest around the time of World War II. The central character of the novel, Stefan Viziru, is an enigmatic figure who is in love with two women, one of whom is his wife. Incapacitated by his situation, Stefan is unable to be happy with either woman and alternates between pursuing and avoiding them. When his wife dies in an air attack, Stefan begins to search for the other woman, Ileana, finally finding her in a forest outside of Paris. They eventually decide to part ways, but while driving to a train station they are involved in a fatal car crash, of which Stefan had a premonition twelve years earlier. The secondary hero of the novel is Biris, a consumptive philosopher who had worked for the Gestapo during the war, and who ultimately dies after enduring the torture of post-war communist intelligence agents. In addition

to Stefan's conflicted attitude towards his personal quest, expressed through his alternating periods of pursuit and avoidance, a primary theme of the novel is the nature of history. While history can be invigorating and revelatory for those who participate in it and change it through their actions, for Stefan it is a merciless trap, beyond his control. At one point in the novel, Biris comments on Stefan's fear and declares that history has "taken revenge" on him and "buries him as often as it can," citing an incident when a Romanian writer is accidentally assassinated because of his striking resemblance to Stefan. The labyrinth is also an important image in the novel, which is repeatedly invoked by both Stefan and Biris and lends thematic significance to the work.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

Eliade's early essays and autobiographical works began to appear in Romanian periodicals as early as 1921, although it was not until the late 1920s, with the publication of the series of essays, "Itinerariu spiritual, I-XII," that the author began to receive serious critical attention. Indeed, by 1928 Eliade was already widely recognized as an astute thinker and the leading spokesman for his generation in Romania—a reputation that increased in the following decade with the publication of his first novels, which were inspired by his travels through India. By 1933, when *Bengal Nights* was awarded the national prize, Eliade was heralded as one of Romania's major literary figures.

He continued to draw critical praise with subsequent novels, such as *Lumina ce se stinge*, *Intoarcerea din rai*, and *Huliganii*, although some reviewers were puzzled or dismayed by the formal experimentations demonstrated in these works and, in the case of *Huliganii*, by the immorality of his characters. After devoting much of the 1940s to the production of scholarly essays, Eliade returned to fiction in 1955, with the publication of *The Forbidden Forest*. Although it is now considered to be his most successful novel, when it first appeared it was not as well received as the author's previous works.

Eliade's standing as a scholar and original thinker also increased during this time. By the 1950s, after his emigration to the United States and affiliation with the University of Chicago, he was widely recognized as one of the leading scholars of religion and was invited to lecture at numerous conferences in Europe and America. Although he was not without detractors, his reputation continued to grow over the next three decades, and at the time of his retirement from the University of Chicago in 1983, he was generally regarded as a founding scholar in the field, credited with establishing the study

of religion as a serious discipline within the American academic community.

While Eliade's seminal role in the development of religious studies is largely undisputed, the critical response to his contributions in the field have been wildly divergent. Many of his detractors have expressed concerns regarding the author's unconventional methods and "uncritical" way of using information to demonstrate his insights. Some have also raised questions regarding his epistemology, arguing that his presuppositions about religion and reality are founded in metaphysics rather than science. Still others have maintained that in order to unite such a wide range of cultural material, Eliade had to impose his own views and beliefs regarding reality and religion on the traditions he studied. Eliade's sympathizers, however, have defended his methods and emphasized his comprehensive approach to the study of religion, which Guilford Dudley III has described as "a passion for the universal meaning of religious phenomena." For these critics, the author's methods transcended cultural boundaries to uncover universalities and recurring patterns within the human experience of the sacred.

The issue of Eliade's phenomenological approach to religion has often been linked to his rather unique position as both scholar and artist, and many critics have explored the connections between his fiction and critical writings. While some, such as Virgil Ierunca, Dudley, and Eugen Simion, have stressed the fundamental and reciprocal nature of his "double occupation," others, such as Seymour Cain, have confessed "to a certain uneasiness" over the author's claim that art and science cooperate "as the joint expression of a single, elementary intuition," namely, "the unrecognizability of miracle" in the modern world. Many commentators have sidestepped the matter of judgment and simply noted the themes—such as the burden of history, the encounter with the sacred, and, in Eliade's words, "the unrecognizable nature of the miraculous"—that dominate his efforts as both a creative artist and a historian of religions.

Despite the controversy surrounding his work as a scholar and humanistic thinker, Eliade remains an important and influential figure in twentieth-century literature, whose writings express his life-long concern for the mythic and religious structures that shape and lend significance to human experience. "For Eliade *artistic imagination* and religious creativeness present many analogies," Matei Calinescu has averred, "because both art and religion are concerned with the problem of meaning—a problem which is central to his whole work as a thinker, novelist, and scholar."

PRINCIPAL WORKS

- Isabel si apele Diavolului* (novel) 1930
Soliloquii (aphorisms) 1932
Maitreyi [*Bengal Nights*] (novel) 1933
India (novel) 1934
**Intoarcerea din rai* (novel) 1934
Lumina ce se stinge (novel) 1934
Oceanografie (essays) 1934
Alchimie Asiatica (essay) 1935
**Huliganii* (novel) 1935
Santier (novel) 1935
Domnisoara Christina (novel) 1936
Cosmologie si alchimie babiloniana (essay) 1937
Sarpele (novel) 1937
Metallurgy, Magic, and Alchemy (essay) 1938
Fragmentarium (essays) 1939
Nunta în cer (novel) 1939
Secretul Doctorului Honigberger. Nopti la Serampore
 [*Two Tales of the Occult*] (novellas) 1940
Iphigenia (play) 1941
Mitul Reintegrării (essays) 1942
Commentarii la legenda Mesterului Manole (essays)
 1943
Insula lui Euthanasius (essays) 1943
Techniques du Yoga (essay) 1948
Le mythe de l'éternel retour: Archétypes et répétition
 [*The Myth of the Eternal Return; or, Cosmos and History*] (essay) 1949
Traité d'histoire des religions [*Patterns in Comparative Religion*] (essay) 1949
Le chamanisme et les techniques archaïques de l'extase [*Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*] (essay) 1951
Images et symboles: Essais sur le symbolisme magico-religieux [*Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism*] (essays) 1952
Le Yoga: Immortalité et liberté [*Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*] (essay) 1954
Fôret interdite [*The Forbidden Forest*] (novel) 1955
Forgerons et alchimistes [*The Forge and the Crucible*] (essay) 1956
Das Heilige und das Profane: Von Wesen des religiösen
 [*The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*] (essay) 1957
Mythes, rêves et mystères [*Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries: The Encounter between Contemporary Faiths and Archaic Realities*] (essay) 1957
Birth and Rebirth: The Religious Meaning of Initiation in Human Culture (essay) 1958
Méphistophélès et l'androgyne [*Mephistopheles and the Androgyne: Studies in Religious Myth and Symbol*] (essay) 1962
Aspects du mythe [*Myth and Reality*] (essay) 1963
Nuvela (novellas) 1963
†Amintiri: I. Mansarda (autobiography) 1966
Pe strada Mântuleasa [*The Old Man and the Bureaucrats*] (novella) 1968

The Quest: History and Meaning in Religion (essay) 1969
Fragments d'un journal [*No Souvenirs: Journal, 1957-1969*] (journal) 1973
Occultism, Witchcraft, and Cultural Fashions: Essays in Comparative Religions (essays) 1976
‡*Histoire des croyances et des idées religieuses*. 3 vols. [*A History of Religious Ideas*] (essays) 1976-83
Fragments d'un journal, II (1970-1978) [*Journal III, 1970-1978*] (journal) 1981
Youth Without Youth and Other Novellas (novellas) 1988
Journal IV, 1979-1985 (journal) 1990
Mystic Stories: The Sacred and the Profane (short stories) 1992

*These works comprise the first two volumes of a trilogy that Eliade never completed.

†This work was translated into English and published in two volumes as *Autobiography, Volume 1: Journey East, Journey West, 1907-1937* and *Autobiography, Volume 2: Exile's Odyssey, 1937-1960* in 1981.

‡This work was published in three volumes as *De l'âge de la pierre aux mystères d'Eleusis* (1976), *De Gautama Bouddha au triomphe du christianisme* (1978), and *De Mahomet à l'âge des réformes* (1983). These volumes were translated and published in English as *From the Stone Age to the Eleusinian Mysteries* (1979), *From Gautama Buddha to the Triumph of Christianity* (1982), and *From Muhammed to the Age of Reforms* (1985).

CRITICISM

Thomas J. J. Altizer (essay date 1963)

SOURCE: Altizer, Thomas J. J. "Understanding the Sacred." In *Mircea Eliade and the Dialectic of the Sacred*, pp. 23-40. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963.

[In the following essay, Altizer discusses Eliade's concept of the sacred in his work, saying that for the author, the sacred is a "dialectical" construct that stands in opposition to the "profane world," which is the unique condition of the "modern historical and existential situation."]

I. MODERN MAN AND THE SACRED

Strangely enough, Eliade, at least in his published work, has ignored Nietzsche's proclamation of the death of God. Yet perhaps no theologian has had so deep a sense of God's death in the modern world—of the eclipse of the transcendent realm—as has Mircea Eliade. Indeed, he has gone so far as to define "modern man" as the man who has negated the sacred: "Modern man's originality, his newness in comparison with traditional societies, lies precisely in his determination to regard himself as a purely historical being, in his wish to live in a basically desacralized cosmos."¹ Now by purely "his-

torical" being Eliade means a radically profane mode of existence, a mode of existence that has withdrawn itself from an awareness of the transcendent, and immersed itself in the immediate temporal moment. This meaning of 'historical' is intimately related to the modern idea of 'historicity': for, in this perspective, 'historicity' means a total immersion in historical time, an immersion that is totally isolated from any meaning or reality that might lie beyond it. So likewise "desacralized" cosmos means profane world, and Eliade's meaning is that modern man wills to live in a profane world, wills to know the world as profane. But, as Heidegger has shown, the world appears as 'world,' as "Worldhood" (*Weltlichkeit*), as a result of an existential mode of man's being-in-the-world.² Insofar as modern man is himself, insofar as he has "chosen" (Sartre's term) to live in a profane world, he is closed to the realm of the sacred. Or, as Nietzsche would have it, modern man can only be himself, can only truly be man, by being the murderer of God.

Noting that modern science has restored a principle that was endangered by the nineteenth century: 'It is the scale that makes the phenomenon,' Eliade has adopted a dialectical approach to the meaning of the sacred; for he has also noted (following Roger Caillois)³ that all the modern definitions of the religious phenomenon have one thing in common: "each has its own way of showing that the sacred and the religious life are the opposite of the profane and the secular life."⁴ Thus Rudolf Otto's famous analysis of the holy as the Wholly Other (deriving from what Otto termed the *mysterium tremendum* component of the numinous)⁵ was in part the product of a uniquely modern historical and existential situation: it is modern man who can only know the holy as the Wholly Other. Having banished the transcendent from his horizon, modern man has chosen a wholly immanent mode of being, and thus can view the sacred only as the Other. Consequently, modern man can only know the sacred dialectically; now the sacred can appear only through a negative dialectic, insofar as modern man has chosen to be a profane being. At bottom, for Eliade, the sacred and the profane are two modes of being in the world, "two existential situations assumed by man in the course of his history."⁶ Already we have arrived at an essential foundation of Eliade's understanding of the sacred: the sacred and the profane are human phenomena, they are created by man's existential choice.

In his study of alchemy, Eliade arrived at a remarkable analogy to illustrate modern man's alienation from the sacred: "We have only to imagine a communion, no longer limited to the eucharistic elements of bread or wine, but extending to every kind of 'substance,' in order to measure the distance separating a primitive religious experience from the modern experience of 'natural phenomena.'"⁷ The world appears as 'nature'—perhaps Heidegger's *Seiendes*, 'existing beings' or

'entities' is relevant here—only through the eclipse of the sacred, only when the religiousness of the cosmos becomes lost. What modern man knows as "objective" knowledge, as "true" or naked reality, has been created by a Faustian turning away from the sacred and the transcendent. But, as Eliade has learned from Indian philosophy, the fate of "secular" thought is to be thought by objects.⁸ In truly knowing the world, man becomes bound to it: not only has the transcendent meaning of the cosmos become opaque to modern nonreligious man, but when man fully knows the world as time, and no longer knows the world in relation to eternity, then "time" comes to constitute man's deepest existential situation. Accordingly, the problems that absorb contemporary man are created by his bondage to time:

It is the *human condition*, and above all the temporality of the human being, that constitute the object of the most recent Western philosophy. It is this temporality that makes all the other "conditionings" possible and that, in the last analysis, makes man a "conditioned being," an indefinite and evanescent series of "conditions."⁹

Above all, it is the genuinely modern—and uniquely modern—experience of "historicity" that is the source of modern man's anxiety and dread: for if dread (*Angst*) is the result of an encounter with the Nothing (as Kierkegaard and Heidegger teach), it is a product of the dissolution of all that which the religious consciousness knows as Being.

"Historical man," the man who *is* insofar as he *makes himself, within history*,¹⁰ is forced to identify himself with the historical moment, with "historicity," and therein becomes bound to a destiny that he can only know as tragic, and an existence that he can only know as absurd. By choosing a profane mode of existence—i.e., by willing to abolish the transcendent—modern man has made an existential choice; he has "chosen" a tragic mode of existence, for he has "chosen" an absolute autonomy which finally encloses him within the concrete moment itself. Therefore modern man's "choice" can be realized only through the abolition of the sacred:

Modern nonreligious man assumes a new existential situation; he regards himself solely as the subject and agent of history, and he refuses all appeal to transcendence. In other words, he accepts no model for humanity outside the human condition as it can be seen in the various historical situations. Man *makes himself*, and he only makes himself completely in proportion as he desacralizes himself and the world. The sacred is the prime obstacle to freedom. He will become himself only when he is totally demysticized. He will not be truly free until he has killed the last god.¹¹

Yet insofar as a dialectical relationship exists between the sacred and the profane, which is to say that neither can fully become itself apart from a total negation of

the other, it is precisely the profane that is negated by the sacred. Thus the same 'reality' assumes a totally different meaning and value in accordance with man's existential "choice."¹² From the point of view of Indian philosophy, which Eliade regards as the fullest conceptual expression of the meaning of the sacred, the *profane reality* is quite simply existence in time:

What modern Western philosophy terms "being situated," "being constituted by temporality and historicity," has its counterpart, in Indian philosophy, in "existence in *maya*." If we can homologize the two philosophical horizons—Indian and Western—everything that India has thought on the subject of *maya* has a certain timeliness for us today. This becomes apparent if, for example, we read the *Bhagavad Gita*. Its analysis of human existence is conducted in a language that is familiar to us; *maya* is not only cosmic illusion but also, and above all, historicity; not only existence in the eternal cosmic becoming but above all existence in time and history.¹³

Just as the profane existence of modern man is created by an abolition of the sacred, the deepest expressions of religious experience must culminate in an abolition of the profane. Finally Indian thought annihilates the profane reality itself: "Existence in Time is ontologically nonexistence, unreality."¹⁴

Eliade does not hesitate to speak of modern man's existential choice as a "fall" into profane existence: "from the Christian point of view, it could also be said that nonreligion is equivalent to a new 'fall' of man—in other words, that nonreligious man has lost the capacity to live religion consciously, and hence to understand and assume it."¹⁵ After the second "fall" the religious sense has fallen even farther than after the first, for it has fallen into the depths of the unconscious; it has been "forgotten." Yet a dialectical relationship exists between that which man has become as a historical being, as a being who makes himself in time, and that which he has abandoned or forgotten: the *sacred reality* itself. In becoming a fully developed human consciousness (Heidegger's *Dasein* and Sartre's *pour soi*), a being who exists in "time," modern man has not simply bound himself to time and history, modern man has created himself as an absolutely *profane* being. But insofar as he exists as a profane being, modern man can only know the sacred as the Nothing. Moreover, the modern scholar can only discover the sacred as a reality that wholly inverts everything that modern man 'knows' to be real: the sacred can only appear to us as the Other, an Other whose very epiphany would dissolve our being in time.

II. KNOWLEDGE AND THE SACRED

In the preface to his phenomenology or morphology of religion (*Traité d'histoire des religions*, 1949, translated as *Patterns in Comparative Religion*), Eliade re-

marks that there are no *purely* religious phenomena; “no phenomenon can be solely and exclusively religious.”¹⁶ That is to say, man has never been manifest historically as a purely religious being; but by employing his own kind of phenomenological *epoche*, Eliade has chosen to apprehend man in a purely religious moment, as a being who knows only—and is himself constituted by—the sacred. Unfortunately, Eliade has never fully presented the method of his phenomenological approach to the *Religionswissenschaft* or the history of religions, although he has made numerous casual remarks about the ‘metahistorical,’¹⁷ the logic of the symbol, a transconscious logic,¹⁸ and a ‘metapsychoanalysis,’ a study of man as a living symbol.¹⁹ First let it be noted that Eliade, as a historian of religions, is related, if only tenuously, to the phenomenological approach to the study of religion initiated by Max Scheler, Gerardus van de Leeuw, and Joachim Wach.²⁰ Perhaps two principles decisively characterize the phenomenological method: “intentionality” and “bracketing.” As defined by the founder of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl, intentionality is the unique peculiarity of experiences “to be the consciousness of something”;²¹ whereas bracketing, the phenomenological method of reduction or *epoche*, occurs when

We put out of action the general thesis which belongs to the natural standpoint, we place in brackets whatever it includes respecting the nature of Being: this entire natural world therefore which is continually “there for us,” “present to our hands,” and will ever remain there, is a “fact-world” of which we continue to be conscious, even though it pleases us to put it in brackets.

If I do this, . . . I use the “phenomenological” epoche, which completely bars me from using any judgement that concerns spatio-temporal existence.

(*Dasein*)²²

Thus the phenomenological method demands not only the suspension of all ontological judgment but also the setting aside of all sciences that relate to the world, and therewith of all propositions relating to the spatiotemporal realm. As Husserl says: “The whole world as placed within the nature-setting and presented in experience as real, taken completely ‘free from all theory,’ just as it is in reality experienced, and made clearly manifest in and through the linking of our experiences, has now no validity for us, it must be set in brackets, untested indeed but also uncontested.”²³ Furthermore, the phenomenological reduction likewise suspends the inquirer’s own empirical existence,²⁴ allowing to remain over as the “phenomenological residuum” the pure experience (*Erlebnis*) or pure consciousness of the “pure Ego.”²⁵ Consequently, Husserl defines phenomenology as “a pure descriptive discipline which studies the whole field of pure transcendental consciousness in the light of pure intuition;”²⁶ and it is a primary rule of Husserl’s

that phenomenology can “claim nothing that we cannot make essentially transparent to ourselves by reference to *Consciousness* and on purely immanent lines.”²⁷

Husserl himself remarks that the “principle of all principles” is that complete clearness is the measure of all truth,²⁸ a principle that is obviously grounded in radical immanence, taking as the most primordial experience “the living now.”²⁹ Accordingly, Husserl’s phenomenological method is directed to an intuitive description of the intentions of pure consciousness. However, to every region of consciousness, and to all categories of would-be objects of consciousness, there corresponds “phenomenologically not only a *basic kind of meaning or position*, but also a *basic kind of primordial dator-consciousness* of such meaning, and, pertaining to it, a *basic type of primordial self-evidence*.”³⁰ In other words, every area of consciousness has *a priori* contents that can be judged and understood only in their own terms. Heidegger, at the very time when he was breaking with Husserl, conceived of phenomenology as a return to the things themselves, and maintained that the formal meaning of phenomenology was “to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself.”³¹ Proceeding by this means, Heidegger discovered phenomenologically that “*knowing is a kind of Being which belongs to Being-in-the-world*.”³² Thus, he rejected what he regarded as the idealistic and subjectivistic grounds of Husserl’s phenomenology and maintained that the intentionality of consciousness is grounded in *Dasein*’s being-in-the-world.

If we could imagine Eliade taking sides in this dispute, he would certainly align himself with Heidegger, for Eliade regards both modern knowledge and modern consciousness (as a radically immanent consciousness) as inevitable products of an existential choice of the profane. Nevertheless, Eliade does employ his own kind of phenomenological method, a method directed to “seeing” just what things are religious in nature and what those things reveal.³³ As the previous section should lead us to see, his phenomenological method is dialectical in nature, always leading to a negation of the meaning of the contents of consciousness. While embarking upon the first phenomenological investigation of religion, Max Scheler insisted that the phenomenological method was basically none other than that of ‘negative theology.’³⁴ The phenomenological scrutiny of the essence is reached by a negative method of successively peeling away the correlates and contraries of a phenomenon, until its indefinable and inconceivable essence is revealed (for ‘to conceive’ means to reduce the object of a concept in terms of other concepts).³⁵ Scheler’s method leads to this primary result:

This is therefore the first sure truth of all religious phenomenology: on whatever level of his religious development he may be, the human being is invariably look-