

PROSOPON

NR 2/2011

[s. 75-96]

Andrzej Korczak

Methodological innovations in religious studies of Mircea Eliade

Keywords: *philosophy, innovations*

New Humanism

Methodology applied by Eliade to his religious studies is a subject of ongoing controversy. Thus, it seems prudent to take a closer look as to what exactly makes it so controversial. He rarely commented on the subject. Rather, one can find his views embedded in his various works, often intertwined with critical remarks directed at other researchers, calling their work unfinished and fallacious.

Eliade wrote only one piece fully devoted to his methodology - as applied to religious studies. *The Quest. History and the Meaning in Religion*¹.

One can read about - sometimes explicitly stated by the author and sometimes less so - the specifics regarding the methodology.

A lot of remarks about the methodology can be found in *Mephistopheles et L'androgyn*².

As well as in the first chapter of *Traite d'histoire des Religions*³.

Eliade mentioned many interesting remarks during his conversations with Claude-Henri Rocquet⁴.

¹ M. Eliade, *The Quest. History and the meaning in Religion*, Chicago and London 1984.

² M. Eliade, *Mephistopheles et L'androgyn*, Paris 1981. Polish edition *Mefistofeles i androgyn*, by Bogdan Kupis, Warsaw 1994.

³ M. Eliade, *Traité d'histoire des Religions*, Paris 1949, polish edition *Traktat o historii religii* by Jan Wierusz-Kowalski, Łódź 1993, s. 30, 86-107.

In his other works the purely methodological remarks are very rare. Usually one deals not with methodology per se, but with the theory of religion and the theory of culture, which is connected to the method of analyzing various cultural and religious phenomena. This method of interpretation, however, ceases to be a research tool strictly utilized by those who study religions.

Every serious researcher makes sure the method used is adequate to the aim.

The purpose of Eliade's work is the depiction of a human being whose life revolves around spiritual visions - the human being known as *homo religiosus*.

The above signifies the juxtaposition between what - in a particular culture - can be construed as profane (*profanum*) versus the sacred (*sacrum*). The Romanian scholar wants to discover the truth regarding the specific nature of human condition - that is why he is reconstructing the spiritual history of humanity.

The history of what's holy, i.e. the hierophany in human history, is supposed to expand our knowledge when it comes to the nature of the spirit, thereby deepening our understanding of human condition.

This knowledge is not supposed to be merely descriptive. The comparison of all behaviors and religious manifestations is supposed to reveal their archetypal nature.

Knowledge which stems from these comparisons ought to enrich the modern culture by presenting to a modern man his own, often forgotten, spiritual abilities as well as needs.

Eliade writes about his work "The essays brought together in this book have not been written primarily for the *specialist*, but rather for the *honnte homme* and the intelligent reader. Thus, I did not hesitate to quote examples that are known, or at least accessible, to the historian of religions, the anthropologist, and the orientalist, but which are probably ignored by the nonspecialist reader. I hope, however, that what may be called a *new humanism* will be engendered by a confrontation of modern Western man with unknown or less familiar worlds of meaning.

These essays, as well as my previous publications, are intended to stress the cultural function which the history of religions could play in a desecralized society and also to develop a systematic hermeneutics of the sacred and its historical manifestations"⁵.

⁴ M. Eliade, *L'épreuve du Labyrinthe. Entretiens avec Claude-Henri Rocquet*, Belfond, 1978,1985. Polish edition *Próba labiryntu* by Krzysztof Środa, Warsaw 1992.

⁵ M. Eliade, *The Quest. History and the meaning in Religion*, Chicago and London 1984.

Thus, this is not about a strictly historical description of religious life, but about the spiritual re-awakening of the West, the new humanism. This form of research program is also the theory of culture. Conscious Eliade critics are perfectly aware of that.

In the foreword written by a publisher of the first Polish edition we can read that, "strong holism and contextualism of Eliade's musings renders the discussion centering on particular theses requires an inclusion of his entire vision of religion, its history and importance for man"⁶.

A purely historical description is accompanied by explanations of different religious manifestations.

Hermeneutics is only possible when the above conditions have been fulfilled - especially, when the understanding of the mind of a modern man has been acquainted with religious documents; that's when the religious studies will fulfill its true cultural function.

This program of religious studies has been summed up by a scientist in worlds - "Hermeneutics is or preponderant interest to us because, inevitably, it is the least-developed aspect of our discipline. Preoccupied and indeed often completely taken up by, their admittedly urgent and indispensable work of collecting, publishing and analyzing religious data scholars have sometimes neglected to study their meaning. Now, these data represent the expression of various religious experiences; in the last analysis they represent positions and situations assumed by men in the course of history.

Like it or not, the scholar has not finished his work when he has reconstructed the history of a religious form or brought out its sociological, economic, or political contexts. In addition, he must understand its meaning-that is, identify and elucidate the situations and positions that have induced or made possible its appearance or its triumph at a particular historical moment.

It is solely insofar as it will perform this task-particularly by making the meanings of religious documents intelligible to the mind of modern man-that the science of religions will fulfill its true cultural functions. For whatever its role has been in the past, the comparative study of religions is destined to assume a cultural role of the first importance in the near future. As we have said on several

⁶ M. Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas* t. 1, Chicago 1978, polish edition *Historia wierzeń i idei religijnych*, by Stanisław Tokarski, Warsaw 1988, p. VII.

occasions, our historical moment forces us into confrontations that could not even have been imagined fifty years ago (...).

This is why believe that the history of religions is destined to play an important role in contemporary cultural life. This is not only because an understanding of exotic and archaic religions will significantly assist in a cultural dialogue with the representatives of such religions. It is more especially because, by attempting to understand o the historian of religions will inevitably attain to a deeper knowledge of man. It is on the basis of such a knowledge that a new humanism, on a world-wide scale, could develop. We may even ask if the history of religions cannot make a contribution of prime importance to its formation. For, on the one hand the historical and comparative study of religions embraces all the cultural forms so far known, both the ethnological cultures and those that have played a major role in history, on the other hand, by studying the religious expressions of a culture, the scholar approaches it from within, and not merely in its sociological, economic and political contexts”⁷.

In the last couple of years many scientists felt the need to cross the boundaries of alternative religious phenomenology and the history of religion in order to access a wider perspective, in which it would be possible to join these two intellectual endeavors together. This understanding of religious studies⁸ comes close to literary studies, to the general theory of culture by Cassiera, and even to Heglism⁹. There's nothing unusual about that - J. Borgosz notices the similarities between Eliade's view to the vision of Teilhard de Chardin¹⁰. If a historian of religion wants to understand the concept of homo religiosus, then he has to interpret knowledge coming from various fields of research [1,20]. Religious studies ought to become an eclectic discipline, "the efforts of scientists seem to be headed in the direction of integration of religious studies", writes Eliade¹¹. In practice, it is about connecting the historical approach with the phenomenological one¹².

Concurrently, the scientist realizes how impossible it is to connect all the methods. He writes: "it would be naive to suppose that the tension between those who

⁷ M. Eliade, *The Quest. History and the meaning in Religion*, Chicago and London 1984, p 12.

⁸ *Ibidem*, c. 15-16.

⁹ G. Lanczkowski, *Einführung in die Reeligionswissenschaft*, Darmstadt 1980, polish edition *Wprowadzenie do Religioznawstwa* by Andrzej Bronk, Warsaw 1986, p. 160.

¹⁰ J. Borgosz, *New anthropology of Eliade's Mircei*, published by Humanitas, t. III 1980, p. 23-47.

¹¹ M. Eliade, *The Quest. History and the meaning in Religion*, Chicago and London 1984, p. 21.

¹² *Ibidem*.

try to understand the *essence* and the *structures* and those whose only concern is the *history* of religious phenomena will one day be completely done away with. But such a tension is creative. It is by virtue of it that the science of religions will escape dogmatism and stagnation. The results of these two intellectual operations are equally valuable for a more adequate knowledge of *homo religious*. For, if the *phenomenologists* are interested in the meanings of religious data, the *historians*, on their side, attempt to show how these meanings have been experienced and lived in the various cultures and historical moments, how they have been transformed, enriched, or impoverished in the course of history. But if we are to avoid sinking back into an obsolete *reductionism* this history of religious meanings must always be regarded as forming part of the history of the human spirit"¹³.

A similar approach can be found in Widengren's work, where methods of historians and phenomenologists are blended together. He believes the boundaries are blurry between the two and the two can never converge¹⁴.

Eliade's connection between the theory of culture and gradation, the constant linkages between phenomenology and the history of religion make him a target of wide criticism¹⁵.

Methodological inspirations

Not everyone is associated with the scientific method, but rather others criticize his theory of culture.

The need for understanding in a sense of re-creating the meaning of each religious form, one needs to be committed to a cause along with meticulous gathering of facts. "Ultimately, the historian of religions is forced by his hermeneutical endeavor to *relive* a multitude of existential situations and to unravel a number of presystematic ontologies. A historian of religious cannot say, for example, that he has understood the Australian religious if he has not Australians' *mode of being in*

¹³ M. Eliade, *The Quest. History and the meaning in Religion*, Chicago and London 1984, p. 21; G. Lanczkowski, *Einführung in die Reeligionswissenschaft*, Darmstadt 1980, polish edition *Wprowadzenie do Religioznawstwa* by Andrzej Bronk, Warsaw. 1986, p. 59.

¹⁴ G. Widengren, *Religionsphänomenologie*, Berlin 1969, polish edition *Fenomenologia religii* by Joanna Białek, Kraków 2008, p. 13; H. Hoffman, *Geo Widengren i fenomenologia religii*, in; G. Widengren, *The Phenomenology of Religion*, p. XIX.

¹⁵ S.A. Tokariew, *The primeval forms of religious beliefs and their development*, Moscow 1959, polish edition *Pierwotne formy wierzeń Religijnych i ich występowanie* by Mirosław Nowaczyk, Warsaw 1969; M. Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas* t. 1, Chicago 1978, polish edition *Historia wierzeń i idei religijnych* by Stanisław Tokarski Warsaw 1988; M. Eliade, *Traité d'histoire des Religions*, Paris, 1949, polish edition *Traktat o historii religii* by Jan Wierusz-Kowalski, Łódź 1993, p. 6-504; 44-46..

the world. And as we shall see later on, even at that stage of culture we find the notion of a plurality of modes of being as well as the awareness that the singularity of the human conditions is the result of a primordial *sacred history*.

Now, these points cannot be successfully realized if the investigator does not understand that every religion has a *center*, in other words, a central conception which informs the entire corpus of myths, rituals and beliefs. This is evident in such religions as Judaism, Christianity and Islam, notwithstanding the fact that the modifications introduced in the course of time tend, in some cases, to obscure the *original form*. For example, the central role of Jesus as Christ is transparent no matter how complex and elaborated some contemporary theological and ecclesiastical expressions may seem in comparison to *original Christianity*. But the *center* of a religion is not always so evident. Some investigators do not even suspect that there is a *center*; rather, they try to articulate the religious values of a certain type of society in compliance with a fashionable theory" - he writes in *The Quest*¹⁶.

The historian of religion should be able to vicariously experience what people of distant culture experienced. He should be able to put himself in his existential circumstances. This type of approach can be viewed as a romantic heritage of that presented in the hermeneutics of Schleiermacher and Dilthey¹⁷, but Goethe remains Eliade's true master. The genetic understanding, i.e. the historical description of a particular phenomenon and the reasons of its appearance in the culture ought to be connected in the mind of a scientist with the understanding of the spiritual core.

This is the Goethe's heritage and the Romanian scientist is perfectly aware of that. In fact, he embraces it.

In his diary, Eliade wrote, "In a modest proportion and without falling into ecstasy, I experienced an extraordinary state, when I understood that historical-religious forms are only countless variations of expressions of a few basic religious experiences. It is all possible thanks to Goethe"¹⁸.

A human being was shown as an inhabitant of two worlds: the historical one - pertaining to the corporeal, and the mythical one, i.e. paradisiac¹⁹. The remark in

¹⁶ M. Eliade, *The Quest. History and the meaning in Religion*, Chicago and London 1984, p. 22.

¹⁷ A. Bronk, *Religious Studies*, Lublin 2009, p. 291-292.

¹⁸ M. Eliade *Religion, Literature, Communism*. Polish edition by A. Zagajewski. London 1990, p. 7-226.

¹⁹ M. Eliade *Sacrum, mit, historia*, polish edition by Anna Tatarkiewicz, Marcin Czerwiński, Warszawa 1970, p. 33-42.

the diary is reflected almost to the letter, in the *Traite*. Goethe's name is not mentioned²⁰.

Eliade is aware of various misrepresentations when poetic imagination plays a crucial role. The history of religion ought to function in a subordinate role, but also the controlling force when dealing with generalization²¹.

Is invoking Goethe, his poetic imagination and the storing in its inside the eternal archetype the ultimate explanation of Eliade's method?

People such as Goethe, Pettazoni, Leonardo da Vinci or Pico della Mirandola serve Eliad as a creation of courage. As an expression.

The true source of inspiration, however, was India. In the Labyrinth Test, we can read, "When I came to India, I wasn't even twenty. India formed me"²².

Eliade's understanding of religious phenomenology is directly connected to his stay in India, as described in the foreword to Allen's work²³.

Tokarski even writes that, "Researching the paths of development in a future scientific, philosophical and literary activity of Eliade within the context of Siantiniketan, Eliadism can be treated as a continuation of Tagor's philosophy"²⁴.

Eliade is very keen on talking about his stay in India, about discoveries of Hindu spirituality, which had a decisive influence on his understanding of archaic religiosity.

He is reluctant to disclose the secrets of the method which allows him to encompass the huge universe of religious experiences²⁵.

He refused to answer Recquet's questions regarding benefits of yoga, and what it gave him later in life. He was keen of talking about what, in India, shaped his theory of religion, or rather the theory of culture, but not about the methodology itself²⁶.

²⁰ S. Tokarski, *Eliade and the Orient*, Wrocław 1984, p. 35.

²¹ M. Eliade *Sacrum, mit, historia*, polish edition by Anna Tatarkiewicz, Marcin Czerwiński, Warszawa 1970, p. 45-50; Z. Pawlak, *The Philosophical Interpretation of Eliade's Religious Concepts*, Włocławek 1995, p. 29.

²² M. Eliade, *L'épreuve du Labyrinthe. Entretiens avec Claude-Henri Rocquet*, Belfond, 1978,1985. Polish edition *Próba labiryntu* by Krzysztof Środa, Warsaw 1992, p. 61.

²³ S. Tokarski, *Eliade and the Orient*, Wrocław 1984, p. 6-7, 14, 17; Z. Pawlak, *The Philosophical Interpretation of Eliade's Religious Concepts*, Włocławek 1995, p. 10.

²⁴ S. Tokarski, *Eliade and the Orient*, Wrocław 1984, p. 16.

²⁵ M. Eliade, *L'épreuve du Labyrinthe. Entretiens avec Claude-Henri Rocquet*, Belfond, 1978,1985. Polish edition *Próba labiryntu* by Krzysztof Środa, Warsaw 1992, p. 661-71.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 61-64.

Asked by Rocquet about personal experience with yoga, he did not want to answer what yoga gave him later in life.

He also mentions the deep feeling of freedom when he was in the Himalayas - practicing yoga.

Other hints are enigmatic and mixed with fantasy, one cannot distinguish between truth and falsehoods²⁷.

We could also trivialize this actual - or alleged - religiosity of Eliade.

We could ask, "Did India really shape him as he claims? Did it really provide him with methods and aims of religious studies?"

Without the feeling of need to be bound by its system of values, norms and examples, without reactions adhering to traditional cultural codes something is lacking - the weight of behavior and manifestations.

And Eliade did not arrive in India a blank slate.

He felt European; he tried to protect his European critical thinking skills from being corrupted by Indian ways²⁸.

His autobiographical account - *Majitreji* - proves that he had his own understanding of Hindu people, observing them through European lenses²⁹.

Doubts on Eliade's methodology

Since the era of Malinowski, field trips conducted personally and propped by understanding of a local language are considered the ideal for anthropologists.

Other questions arise: Does XX India really offer an opportunity to study and understand the archaic India?

After all, understanding the archaic Hindu spirituality is tantamount to encompassing every single archaic religion.

A key question arises: Did Eliade conduct systematic research of yoga serve as a blueprint for different religious manifestations and behaviors?

Yoga is a polysemic term, used to denote various meditative techniques, breathing techniques, visualization techniques, auditory techniques, contempla-

²⁷ Ibidem, p. 49-54; M. Eliade *Doctor Honingberger's Secret*, Polish edition *Tajemnica doktora Honigbergera* by Ireneusz Kania. Kraków, p. 17.

²⁸ M. Eliade, *L'épreuve du Labyrinthe. Entretiens avec Claude-Henri Rocquet*, Belfond, 1978,1985. Polish edition *Próba labiryntu* by Krzysztof Środa, Warsaw 1992, p. 42.

²⁹ M. Eliade, *Majitreji*, polish edition by Irena Harasimowicz, Warsaw, p. 18.

tive techniques, psychological exercises, training of one's will and concentration, therefore it would be prudent to limit its meaning to suit our purposes.

Fortunately, in this case Eliade offers some assistance.

Bhakti is one of his most important discoveries in India, and he confesses that, the existence of philosophy - or rather its spiritual dimension - which was no know to him beforehand in that particular way..

He writes, "Yoga, similarly to Sankhja, affirms the dualism of matter and spirit, but its not the dualism which is of interest to me. That in Sankhji and yoga, human and the universe, life itself is not an illusion."

Life is real, the world is real - that is one of the most important discoveries made by Eliade.

It is possible to conquer the world, to tame the stream of life itself. Furthermore, in Tanthrisim, life can be altered - a final result of a long process of yoga preparation. The process is about the alternation of physiological and sexual activity.

He further writes, "In India, I discovered a range of techniques ignored by the Orientalists, psychological techniques, thanks to which man can indulge in life while simultaneously controlling it."

Life can be transformed via the experience of sanctity³⁰. It is not about negation, as with sensory experiences in the Hindu philosophy.

Rather, it's about imbuing the mundane physiological and sensory experiences with mysticism. Discovering in our feelings, perceptions and cognitive acts a supra-individual, universal - if not cosmic - significance.

Practically, the above means the fulfillment of certain actions, i.e. mimicking actions, mimicking what our divine ancestors did.

One could accuse Eliade of over-involvement, which shouldn't happen in case of a phenomenologist, and even more so in the case of a scientist analyzing the history of religion.

Kořakowski attempts to defend Eliade by writing that, "work would not change its direction; it rested on the description of intentional link between the myth and its subject, without judging the ontological connection"³¹.

³⁰ M. Eliade, *L'épreuve du Labyrinthe. Entretiens avec Claude-Henri Rocquet*, Belfond, 1978,1985. Polish edition *Próba labiryntu* by Krzysztof Środa, Warsaw 1992, p. 61-62.

It is difficult to agree with this constation, even more so due to Kołakowski's remark, a more profound one, about Eliade's method, "The understanding of myth posits that one believes the reference to religious behaviors linking it to the subject is not just an intentional move, but also an ontological connection, an energetic one"³².

It also posits that that the answers regarding the ultimate provenance of religious symbols cannot avoid faith in the primeval manifestation.

We can further read, I have no doubts that Eliade has faith in elevation of religious behaviors which he describes, he gives them a big benefit of the doubt, almost believing in their supernatural heritage.

In *Mephistopheles et L'androgyné* Eliade unequivocally states; "Because a human being is a homo symbolicus, and his every action is driven by symbology, thus all facts are - by definition - symbolic in nature.

Nothing more certain that every religious and every cultural remnant substantiates the existence of meta-empirical reality"³³.

Every religious act by its very nature, is imbued with meaning, which is ultimately symbolic, because it pertains to supernatural forms and values.

The discernment of the final, supernatural meaning of the religious act does not direct the scientist away from phenomenological religious study. In fact, the opposite is true.

But this meaning has to actually be discerned and not imposed, because then it will be an ex post phenomenology.

Here, one can ascribe one mistake to Eliade's reasoning, because he so willingly ascribes supernatural meaning to religious acts just because they are religious, i.e. they originate from an archaic culture. Such an approach renders it impossible to differentiate between authentic religions and pseudo-religions.

On the one hand, Eliade appears to be uncovering the meaning of religious behaviors and concepts, on the other he simply posits everything religious pertains to the preternatural reality.

³¹ L. Kołakowski, *Religion as the Paralysis of Time*, in: M. Eliade, *Traite...*, polish edition; M. Eliade, *Traité d'histoire des Religions*, Paris 1949, polish edition *Traktat o historii religii* by Jan Wierusz-Kowalski, Łódź 1993, p. 7.

³² L. Kołakowski, *Religion as the Paralysis of Time*, in: M. Eliade, *Traite...*, polish edition, p. V.

³³ M. Eliade, *Mephistopheles et L'androgyné*, Paris 1981. Polish edition *Mefistofeles i androgyn*, by Bogdan Kupis, Warsaw 1994, p. 205.

He groups these concepts and religious behaviors, which suit his vision, i.e. the ones which transcend both time and history.

Humans - by the sheer very fact of being human - transcends biology, thus Eliade's intuition is true in a wider sense, this is why the scientist does not really pay attention to the outcome of the comparisons.

The latter, however, does not offer a criterion of differentiation between real religions from religious intentions, behaviors, and concepts - which make use of everything belonging to religion.

There's no way to discriminate between religion and pseudo-religion.

For example: Waardenburg analyzes human intentions via the prism of religions. It states that as long as the antithesis cannot be proven, a certain intention can be treated as religious and non-religious. Intentions can cause an object to become worshipped, the process commonly called 'absolutization.' To put it simply, an object is deified. The process of absolutization can rarely be observed by members of a particular society who adhere to the custom; rather, it is observed by external parties who do not exhibit as extreme level of devotion - indeed, if any - toward an idol. The question as to why a certain intention becomes 'religiously charged' while another one becomes 'defused' requires further analysis. One could put forward a hypothesis that whether a particular intention is religious or non-religious is decided by the direction. If a particular intent is perceived as a religious one, consequently everything associated with the intent will also be linked to religious aspects. Therefore, it is the power of collective that decides whether a particular intent is charged or defused³⁴. This is the biggest flaw in his methodology.

Is M. Eliade a fenomenologist?

The immersion in the archaic worldview, sharing of the beliefs regarding which religious act ought to be researched, putting oneself in his proverbial existential shoes does not go beyond the competences of the phenomenologist of religion.

³⁴ J. Waardenburg, *Religionen und Religion. Systematische Einführung in die Religionswissenschaft*, New York-Berlin 1986. Polish edition *Religia a Religia. Systematyczne wprowadzenie do Religioznawstwa* by Andrzej Bonk, Warsaw 1991, p. 182-193.

It is difficult to pass judgment on the meaning of a particular symbol or religious act without understanding the necessity of fulfilling this act prior to actual judgment.

Gerardus van der Leeuw wrote in *Phänomenologie der Religion*; "Reality is always my reality, history my history, the extension of a living man, we need to understand that all which manifests is not given to us directly but only as a portent, and its up to us to unravel its meaning. If we are not experiencing it consciously, we cannot explain the phenomenon.

In the words of Usener, who did not know phenomenology but understood its principles, *Only if, with full devotion, we immerse ourselves in the spiritual will we be able to discover all those threads, which connect the old with the new.*

Van der Leeuw is aware this kind of experience is more of an art than science.

Oftentimes, the involvement of Eliade reaches beyond conscious methodical experiencing of religious phenomenon for cognitive purposes. He actually lives the meta-physical dimension and the psychological necessity of many words that he describes³⁵.

One could call him a preacher of the universal religion without making it sound exaggerated. One can be a man of faith, as well as a phenomenologist adhering to one's religion, such as Max Scheler³⁶.

The risk of falsifying - or not fulfilling - the epoche pertains to everyone, be it believers or non-believers, although one has to acknowledge that the risk remains much higher for a self-proclaimed apostle of archaic religion.

For each apostle, the good is stemming from his faith and is a justification of various oversights, mistakes and irresponsible generalizations.

Is the program of dropping an 'ontological bomb' on the West, as he called the *Traite* - is it not of such a significant value for Eliade, that he surpasses the rigorous scientific approach?

Eliade was accused of ignoring the facts, the impressionism of his account, the marking of the phenomenological method, generalizations of judgment, a too broad definition of sacrum, lack of temporal placement of archaic spirituality, and the most significantly of all: that he creates generic terms to which he throws everything without any order whatsoever - as writes Tokariew.

³⁵ G. Leeuw, Van der, *Phänomenologie der Religion*, Tübingen 1956, polish edition *Fenomenologia Religii* by Jerzy Prokopiuk, Warsaw 1997, p. 587.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 593-594.

The fragment analyzes the benefits deriving from the rigid classification of religious beliefs. The author claims it is artificial and limiting when compartmentalization is applied to such a complex topic as the religious studies. For example, he writes, "we could classify our material according to the following categories: the Sun cult, the Moon cult, the heaven cult, the storm cult, the mountain cult, the tree cult, the water cult, the animalistic cult, the cult of the dead, ghosts, gods, et al. The author asks us, "what would be the point of such a rigid delineation? We are asked to consider the Sun as an example: on the surface, it would seem, the Sun invokes similar connotations, and its perception by various peoples throughout the planet³⁷.

Other accusations including linguistic errors, partial selection of documentary material, remain mostly unsubstantiated. Methodology errors have been uncovered, albeit a few.

The accusation of a too broad of a definition is a result of our familiarity with monotheistic religions, and (in the last decades), the marginalization of religion and the archaic worldview reconstructed by Eliade may seem to have traces of a pan-religious approach to it³⁸.

The accusation of using an excessively flowery language could be construed as the author's writing talent. He deliberately avoids defining religion.

Our understanding of religion and religiosity ought to emerge from the lecture of various sources, not just that Eliade's, but there is something more significant to the accusations, apart from lacking the definition of sacrum and hierophany.

Describing the events and religious behaviors with impressionist flair, the scientist infuriates his colleagues. They have, and prefer, standard research methods: the structuralism, historical description, phenomenology. They, contrary to Eliade, usually have a narrow scope of research.

Even if the subject of scrutiny is complex, as is the case with phenomenology, the subject remains more or less tangible with scientists having an easy access to it.

³⁷ S.A. Tokariew, *The primeval forms of religious beliefs and their development*, Moscow 1959, polish edition *Pierwotne formy wierzeń religijnych i ich występowanie* by Mirosław Nowaczyk, Warsaw 1969, p. 30-33.

³⁸ T. Margul, *Sto lat nauki o religiach świata*, Warsaw 1964, 329-338.

The situation with Eliade is different he describes the content of his own consciousness, his own spiritual states, something which is basically part of his subjective experience.

This method is extrapolated from his yoga experiences. He is in a state of a permanent epoche, and he did not start as the phenomenologist

Bronk writes, "history of religion as perceived by Eliade is not a philosophical-historical science (this is how religious studies was viewed when it began), but a structural one, the analysis of religious awareness under the influence of sacram. Methodologically speaking, this concept is difficult to realize, because it requires a simultaneous positing of historical and systematic questions, and even normative ones, because the phenomenological method asserts a specific ontology in a form of conviction regarding the trans-historical historical and religious structures, as well as archetypes³⁹.

His conviction regarding the existence of a uniform structure when it comes to human soul gives him the courage to apply his meditational experience to religious studies.

Immersed in meditation, he accesses the deeper layers of his psyche, he discovers simpler and more synthetic notions - similar to ones found in archaic religions.

He becomes convinced that individual psyche is a shortcut containing an entire history of humanity, and that many levels of spiritual history are concealed in a form of profound, universal religious connotations.

Eliade discovered it all in India, but to use this discovery as a European scientist he needed people who would - unbeknownst to them - conduct research with this particular aim in mind.

Here is, where his admiration for Pettazione, Goethe, Pico and Della Mirandolio comes from.

Nonetheless, the situation of this young Romanian scientist containing diamonds inside him would have been very difficult had not it been for Dumezil.

³⁹ A. Bronk, *The Basics of Science and Religion*, Lublin 2009, p. 294.

It is not just about a foreword to *Traite*, about a debut in a scientific society, but rather about showing in Dumezil's work that there are deep hidden layers of Indo-European religious concepts⁴⁰.

The phenomenologist of religion, however, be it Max scheler, Widengren or Van der Leeuw, undergoes methodical epoche, which ultimately means, they are convinced there exist a subject of cognition transcending the consciousness. For them, the object is a thing, even so subtle as a concept or a religious act.

For Eliade, every subject of cognition is his state of consciousness. Thus, despite huge erudition and documentary background we get the feeling that we are flirting with the impressions of a poet describing his own life experience.

The boundary between van der Leuw's ideal type and Bachelard's poetic typology is often blurry, and easy for one to unwittingly transgress.

Only the focus on the object independent of consciousness, real and not possessed by it, allows to maintain the suggestion of objectivity, while the attitude of Eliade is the emphasis of his personal experience, which adds an air of subjectivity.

Eliadism is a scientific mindset, an attitude which allows the linkage of various methods, all the while refraining from identifying with them.

Is phenomenology among them? Absolutely, because Eliade wants to re-create the meaning of the word on his own terms⁴¹.

Tokarski writes that, "This phenomenology is closer to the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty than Husserl, because (...) every hierophany is a manifestation occurring within the space-time continuum, and concurrently it constitutes an attempt to transcend the historical conditioning of time and secular space"⁴².

Indeed, Husserl does not take his attempts to understand the core of demeanor and religious conceptions that far, and van der Leeuw invokes Ditley's authority more than Husserl's.

⁴⁰ G. Leeuw, Van der, *Phänomenologie der Religion*, Tübingen 1956, polish edition *Fenomenologia religii* by Jerzy Prokopiuk, Warsaw 1997, p. 583-586; A. Bronk, *The Basics of Science and Religion*. Lublin 2009, p. 291, 303-307.

⁴¹ D. Allen (1978) *Structure and Creativity in Religion. Hermeneutics in Mircea Eliade's Phenomenology and New Directions*. Foreword by Mircea Eliade, Paris- New York, ch. V.

⁴² S. Tokarski, *Eliade and the Orient*, Wrocław 1984, p. 32.

Anti - reductionism

What I said about the Hindu inspirations of Eliade's method does not disqualify him as a phenomenologist. The phenomenology itself is multi-faceted⁴³.

Going further, he was accused of applying methods used for archaic religions to monotheistic religions, to which they simply cannot be applied.

The Romanian scientist probably did not really care, because the underlying essence of every religion lies deep within the recesses of human psyche, thus containing its archaic layer. This layer is what is truly valuable, not everything imposed by the historical-sociological modification.

In order to uncover and adequately describe this archaic layer of religion, he was inclined to apply the connotations to the psychology of depth.

However, one cannot compare Jungian and Eliadic understanding of archetypes. Jung views it as purely psychological, whereas Eliade perceives it as metaphysical: Augustinian-Platonic⁴⁴.

One must admire Eliade, that he did not get swayed by psychologism, even though it could have been expected of him⁴⁵.

If the sense and the aim of religious behaviors - in his interpretation of living the sacrum, i.e. the sacredness of all life, then the former also means the return to one's psychological-spiritual sources within the consciousness.

The discernment of the world as perceived by the human feeling in the light of spiritual beginnings blurs the division between that which is subjective and that which is objective.

One can even posit that by focusing on the matter via the prism of psychology, this fluidity of perception gives meaning to what has been called the return of *in illo tempore*.

In this instance, it is not difficult for an erroneous epoche, for ex post phenomenology, for misinterpretation caused by overly trusting one's senses.

⁴³ J. Waardenburg, *Matter of Religious Phenomenology*, in; Euhemer - Przegląd Religioznawczy 1974, p. 77.

⁴⁴ M. Eliade, *The Myth of Eternal Return*, New York 1955 polish edition *Mit wiecznego powrotu* by Krzysztof Kocjan, Warsaw 1998, p. 43-44; M. Eliade, *Mephistopheles et L'androgyné*, Paris 1981. Polish edition *Mefistofeles i androgyn*, by Bogdan Kupis, Warsaw 1994, p. 6, 15, 82.

⁴⁵ G. Lanczkowski, *Einführung in die Reeligionswissenschaft*, Darmstadt 1980, polish edition *Wprowadzenie do religioznawstwa* by Andrzej Bronk, Warsaw. 1986, p. 106.

First and foremost, it is relatively easy to personify the penetration of deep layers of psyche with what Freud's psychoanalysis did, or Jung's psychology of depth.

Eliade noticed the imposing character of psychoanalysis and the psychology of depth, he knew that in the culture of the West, the door blocking the way to the human soul is no more.

For this reason, he welcomed the Jungian concept of archetype as an asset in restoring the awareness in the West.

Despite Freud's contribution, Eliade was very critical of him, calling him a reductionist⁴⁶.

Eliade approved of Jung, and it resulted in a long-time partnership, but Eliade thought he should not have used the word archetype in his work, *The Myth of Eternal Return* due to the word's strong connotation with Jungian terminology⁴⁷.

The concept of Jungian psychology was a grist for his mill, because it told about deep layers of psyche hidden below the threshold of our awareness, i.e. subliminally.

The collective unconscious, in which the division between the subjective and the objective ceases to exist. Eliade's anti-reducionizm can be found in many of his remarks. There is no such thing as a *pure* religious datum, outside of history, for there is no such thing as a human datum that is not at the same time a historical datum. Every religious experience is expressed and transmitted in a particular historical context. But admitting the historicity of religious experiences does not imply that they are reducible to non-religious forms of behavior. Stating that a religious datum is always a historical datum does not mean that it is reducible to a nonreligious history – for example, to an economic, social, or political history. We must never lose sight of one of the fundamental principles of modern science: *the scale creates the phenomenon*. As we have recalled elsewhere, Henri Poincaré asked, not without irony *Would a naturalist who had never studied the elephant except through the microscope consider that he had an adequate knowledge of the creature?.* The microscope reveals the structure and mechanism of cell, which structure and mechanism are exactly the same in all multicellular organism. The elephant is certainly a multicellular organism, but is that all that it is? On the microscopic scale, we

⁴⁶ M. Eliade, *The Quest. History and the meaning in Religion*, Chicago and London 1984, p. 35-38; 74-75.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, c. 38-39; M. Eliade, *Mephistopheles et L'androgyne*, Paris 1981. Polish edition *Mefistofeles i andrognyn*, by Bogdan Kupis, Warsaw 1994, p. 6, 15, 82, 199; 40-45.

might hesitate to answer. On the scale of human vision, which at least has the advantage of presenting the elephant as a zoological phenomenon, there can be no doubt about the reply - he said in *The Quest*⁴⁸.

„It would be futile to explain religion by applying one of those basic functions, which ultimately determine human nature.

It would equally futile to decipher Madame Bovary via the application of social, economic and political facts - important, yes, but having no influence on the literary piece”⁴⁹.

Anti-reductionist remarks are present throughout Eliade's work⁵⁰.

He offers a couple of his works where interested parties can delve into the matter in more detail.

He believed that the method utilized by theosophists, is - in principle - positivistic in nature.

The mystical mist enshrouds the facts forming an evolutionary paradigm based on the optimistic faith in the moral betterment of humanity. It is a mixture that he could not stand, against which he fought by re-constructing the archaic principle as the antithesis⁵¹.

He simply understood that hermeneutics is a vicious circle, and the ideal of groundless approach to gather documents is unattainable.

„The presentation itself will commence the analysis of ontological concepts lying at its foundation. Then, we will propose the reading of this concept, remaining aware that only the concept can serve as an elucidatory tool”⁵².

From certain documents an intuitive understanding of this concept transpires, and this understanding influences the further execution, decipherment and understanding based on a key, which gave the current understanding.

In *The Myth of Eternal Return*, he connects the cult of Demeter, the customs of fertility cult in Northern and Central Europe, with similar customs in the ancient African Eve and the Roman Empire⁵³.

⁴⁸ M. Eliade, *The Quest. History and the meaning in Religion*, Chicago and London 1984, p. 19.

⁴⁹ M. Eliade, *Traité d'histoire des Religions*, Paris 1949, polish edition *Traktat o historii religii* by Jan Wierusz-Kowalski, Łódź 1993, p. 1.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, part. II-III

⁵¹ M. Eliade, *The Quest. History and the meaning in Religion*, Chicago and London 1984, p. 66-67.

⁵² M. Eliade, *The Myth of Eternal Return*, New York 1955 polish edition *Mit wiecznego powrotu* by Krzysztof Kocjan, Warsaw 1998, p. 14.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 36-38.

Blanket statements? Not necessarily. An intuitive discernment of religious essence, the extrapolation of historical and social manifestation is at the heart of religious phenomenology. Lanczkowski said in his famous work.

The difference between history of religion, which revolves around researching the historical facts, phenomenology is more about mutual correspondence of related religious manifestations. Thus, the phenomenology of religion can be construed as comparative religion. The term comparative religion is not set in stone and is subject to many interpretations, depending on the background of the scientist. Therefore, it is best to avoid the term altogether when possible. Even when comparing, however, it is important to remain as impartial as possible and not engage in search for unilateral parallelisms. The context of a particular religious aspect is also of utmost importance, as it provides necessary extraneous data crucial for a proper comparative analysis⁵⁴.

Those, who criticize this method want to annul the phenomenology of religion⁵⁵.

The desire to capture the essence of a particular concept or religious behavior forces one to search for the foundations of the perfect type.

A practical need derives from the above, the need to reduce the existing differences. Assuming of course, that those differences are of no significance to a particular endeavor⁵⁶.

Nobody proved Eliade omits important aspects when grouping behaviors and religious symbols, although - some claim- he had been superficially generalizing the topic.

The accusation has mainly been formed in regard to *Traite*.

Just as there are different type of phenomenologies, so it is the case with what particular terms which denote different things to different individuals.

Max Scheler - who focuses on the belief in God and to him religious forms are a mere byproduct - can hardly be accused of generalizations.

⁵⁴ G. Lanczkowski, *Einführung in die Religionswissenschaft*, Darmstadt 1980, polish edition *Wprowadzenie do Religioznawstwa* by Andrzej Bronk, Warsaw. 1986, p. 59-60.

⁵⁵ A. Rega, *The Man in the World of Symbols*, Kraków 2001; G. Lanczkowski, *Einführung in die Reeligion-swissenschaft*, Darmstadt 1980, polish edition *Wprowadzenie do Religioznawstwa* by Andrzej Bronk, Warsaw. 1986, p. 68.

⁵⁶ G. Lanczkowski, *Einführung in die Reeligion-swissenschaft*, Darmstadt 1980, polish edition *Wprowadzenie do Religioznawstwa* by Andrzej Bronk, Warsaw. 1986, p. 60-62.

Some notice the abandoning of precision in forming their deliberations and terms in case of Widengren and Van den Leuw.

Eliade would find himself at the end of this list, but it is noteworthy that his research is multi-faceted in nature.

Eliade's work is not just about the *Traite*, but also the *History of Religious Ideas* - the book serving as a blueprint for every single manual.

But if we take a closer look at the factographical background which was an expression of his intuitive introspections, then awe is the word.

He was perfectly aware of the difficulties arising from documentary work.

He expressed his doubts on the subject of archaic religiosity on many occasions⁵⁷.

Final remarks

Stanislaw Tokarski had this to say about Eliade's scientific method, "In his method, he created a synthesis of four most popular -back then - philosophical systems: phenomenology, structuralism, psychoanalysis and existentialism.

The cornerstone, which assured the integrity of his contemplations was the axiology of Hindu yoga - religious studies understood in an extremely profound manner, surpassing its contemporary form..."⁵⁸.

This astute remark could be complemented by stating that yoga gave Eliade the basis of ontological theory, although the desire to transcend the historical and relative had been felt by him before visiting India in person.

From this ontology derives his axiology, complementing his every concept and deed, which led to experiencing what is both real and relevant⁵⁹.

The transcendence of a typical cognitive and fecund condition - thanks to yoga - so he could renounce that what is absolute and that which forces him to believe

⁵⁷ M. Eliade, *Traité d'histoire des Religions*, Paris, 1949, polish edition *Traktat o historii religii* by Jan Wierusz-Kowalski, Łódź 1993, p. 1-8; M. Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas* t. 1, Chicago 1978, polish edition *Historia wierzeń i idei religijnych* by Stanislaw Tokarski Warsaw 1988, p. 5-8; M. Eliade, *Mephistopheles et L'androgyné*, Paris 1981. Polish edition *Mefistofeles i androgyn*, by Bogdan Kupis, Warsaw 1994, p. 206-209, 218-220; M. Eliade, *The Quest. History and the meaning in Religion*, Chicago and London 1984, p. 110-111.

⁵⁸ S. Tokarski, *Eliade and the Orient*, Wrocław 1984, p. 28, 30-31.

⁵⁹ J. Waardenburg, *Religionen und Religion. Systematische Einführung in die Religionswissenschaft*, New York-Berlin 1986. Polish edition *Religia a Religia. Systematyczne wprowadzenie do Religioznawstwa* by Andrzej Bonk, Warsaw 1991, p. 110-156.

that being in a state of permanent meditation over a structure and the meaning of a symbol or a religious act is the best way to scrutinize its essence.

The latter is a meditational-intuitive method⁶⁰, which can be broken down into four philosophical compartments, as mentioned by Tokarski.

Does that mean Eliade ventures outside his area of expertise?

When it comes to the documentary preparations and - partially - in the assessment of factographic views, this is not the case, but where he mentions the restoration of the West, the "ontological bomb" thrust into the Western culture, the scientist becomes a servant of a priest representing the new, archaic religion, even if he is objective in a higher spiritual sense, this often exceeds the boundaries of science.

How to determine the legitimacy of normative statements which stem from the descriptions of archaic religiosity and the condition of homo religious in general is a matter of a comprehensive study involving his anthropology and the theory of culture.

Is reaching the state of meditation, and the subsequent intuitive understanding of religious manifestations, tantamount to the phenomenology of religion?

Is this an objective, tangible, and repetitive method - and are the results transmissible?

These questions require arduous scientific study, which ought to be conducted if we are to talk about science via the prism of our Western understanding.

It is evident that the most influential humanistic streams of thought in the West are not based solely on the scientific method.

There is a difference between the actions directing humanistic approach which is popular due to its accurate intuition, authenticity of feelings, the strength and the power of expression, and the ones which rely on scientific approach.

Eliade's religious studies aspires to belong to the latter, thus applying scientific principles to his work is completely justified.

Polish famous scholar Andrew Bronk claims that the Eliade's behavior belongs to the half-philosophical tradition of hermeneutics, where more than pure facts one valued the scope of vision; the verification or falsification of data gathered from the entire world is never possible⁶¹.

⁶⁰ B.S. Rennie, *Reconstructing Eliade: Making Sense of Religion*, New York 1996, p. 27, 88.

⁶¹ A. Bronk, *The Basics of Science and Religion*, Lublin 2009, p. 306; J. Waardenburg, *Religionen und Religion. Systematische Einführung in die Religionswissenschaft*, New York-Berlin 1986. Polish edition

A question - which can be viewed as rhetorical - remains: can the most crucial religious aspects be scientifically quantified?

If not, then we ought to value the researchers who - with their huge amount of experience and methodological workshop - easily transcends the limits of mainstream science.