MIRCEA ELIADE
AND THE HISTORY OF RELIGION

On the occasion of the edition of the following books "Aries" is privileged to present this second paper on the great scholar (see "Analyse" by Claude-Henri Roquet in "Aries" III).


As we are doubtless all aware, neither the influences nor the controversies which have helped shape the history of religions are trends which have arisen during the preceding century or so. In The Study of Religion: an Historical Approach (1), Jan de Vries has outlined its development, beginning with the Greeks. Not surprisingly perhaps, one can discern traces (often, more than mere traces) of an apparently modern idea expressed in an earlier age (2). I recall being struck by this while an undergraduate studying philosophy and general systems theory, when I would find time and time again that purportedly "new" concepts from the latter had already been painstakingly worked out in the writings of philosophical thinkers (3). However, it is not my intention to attempt a recapitulation of de Vries' excellent survey here, but rather to begin to place Mircea Eliade's thought in the context of certain methodological controversies that are raging within the history of religions field.

Guilford Dudley has suggested a connection between the confusion evidenced by scholars of religion with regard to what it is they are about and the variety of names they use to designate their work. He describes how, for example, during the 1950's Mircea Eliade, Joseph Kitagawa and Charles Long used the term "history of religions"; Erwin Goodenough, "science of religion"; W. Bede Kristensen and Geraldus van der Leeuw,
"phenomenology of religion"; and Pettazoni and Wach, "allgemeine Religionswissenschaft" (4).

Almost twenty years earlier, in the preface to The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology, Jerald Brauer envisioned two possible futures for the field. The first was that history of religions would be absorbed into other disciplines; the second, that it would come into its own as a separate and important discipline which would serve as a bridge "within and between", as he put it, "the social sciences, humanities, and theology" (5). Brauer commented as well on the resurgence of religion, particularly as it manifested in the area of communication between east and west, suggesting that this might be enough to turn the tide toward a future as bridge. One could hardly wish for a better context to promote dialogue than that which could occur among scholars of religion.

In the same volume Joseph Kitagawa noted the lack of what he termed "adequate training centers for Religionswissenschaft in North America," in his essay "History of Religions in North America" (6). He added that because of this lack, scholars from other disciplines were being brought in to teach courses on world religion. The drawback of course is that all of these specialists bring methods from their ‘home’ disciplines to bear on the topic; with the consequence that they disagree, often heatedly, on the best approach to the problems that arise.

During the last two decades tension has grown between the need to specialize on the one hand, on the other, the need to acquire sufficient familiarity with areas outside the concentration in order to perform adequately as teachers and scholars of world religion. I think that the disagreement between specialist and generalist has in no way lessened since the late 'fifties; if anything, in fact, it may have become heightened. In large measure the increased tension (which in some cases borders on animosity) appears directly related to the question of method. For example, the wouldbe specialist in ancient Near Eastern study must devote years to language preparation simply so that he or she can access and study the primary corpus. In addition, time must be spent becoming acquainted with an enormous body of secondary literature (which in the case of Near Eastern studies spans more than a century). Only after this grueling preparation is a scholar considered equipped to advance some insight into an already existing problem or to approach topics in a new way, an then only in an exceedingly tentative fashion. Is such a scholar likely to be disposed even to tolerate, much less receive, ideas from an outsider, a mere generalist, an historian of religions? I will return to this question presently.

Another conflict is that which exists between the empirical (or "scientific") and the subjective types of method for the study of religion (7). The former is singularly reluctant to admit humanitarian, theological, or even philosophical considerations to the study of religions,
arguing that such concerns are likely to have an adverse effect on the integrity of the phenomena being studied. On this view, I suppose, the idea is that we must allow the facts to speak for themselves, as it were; whether or not the facts ever do so is a question that I will set aside for the moment. The second type is more subjective, more intuitively based, and decidedly hermeneutical in its focus. Guilford Dudley's account of the controversy locates Wilfred Cantwell Smith's "dialogic approach" within the second camp; "we' talking about a 'they'... becomes 'we' talk to 'you'... becomes 'we all' are talking with each other about us" (8). W.C. Smith is not alone, of course; many others could equally and appropriately be located here, although they do not all espouse the dialogic approach, on account of a shared emphasis on hermeneutics and interpretation: G. van der Leeuw, Heinrich Zimmer, Henry Corbin, Antoine Faivre, Wendy O'Flaherty, Mircea Eliade, Ananda Coomaraswamy, and Raimundo Panikkar, to name only a few. And although each approaches the study of religion differently, all tend to emphasize an interpretive mode when handling data: each of these scholars frames the material in order to make meaningful sense of it all. Thus, their role is not simply one of reporting the facts, of cataloging data in a fashion that could be viewed as rather more bibliographic than anything else.

Also related to these arguments is the argument about what constitutes appropriate subject matter. Nowhere perhaps was it more evident than at the 1960 International Congress for the History of Religions. According to Dudley, during the course of its proceeding, persons from both sides "entered into open dispute" (9). He quotes from a statement that was made by J. Zwi Werblowsky, one of the proponents of the empiricist camp:

*Usually a relatively great number of the papers presented at our congresses, though valuable and interesting in themselves, would be perfectly legitimate contributions to theological conferences but are clearly out of place in our organization. This applies both to papers dealing with the special theological problems of particular religions, and to lectures on the true and ultimate significance of religion and the like. Very frequently papers are presented that testify to the good will and moral endeavor of certain religions and/or certain scholars, but they can hardly be said to be relevant to the work which the IAHR was meant to do. Their rightful place would be at conferences convened for the purpose of promoting international and inter-religious peace and understanding.* (10)

This is clearly a statement which deserves our consideration but first I want to examine some of the categories Mircea Eliade uses in his work. This in no way represents a digression from the present discussion, for at this conference Eliade was thought to be a potential arbiter of methodological standards for the entire history of religions
Subsequently, however, a number of persons have had grave second thoughts concerning his qualifications for such a role.

In keeping with the tradition established by many scholars from his generation and the one immediately preceding it, Mircea Eliade has written voluminously. His writing is not confined to the academic, but includes other genres as well: novels, short stories, autobiography, and journal. For me, three works stand out from among the rest: *The Sacred and the Profane* (11), *The Forge and the Crucible* (12), and *Autobiography: Journey East, Journey West* (13).

The autobiography is a valuable key for understanding Eliade's personal development and his growth as a scholar. I find it good to be able to place his work in the context of his life, or at least, of his youth, up until the time he fled Romania. For example, his description of one of his teachers:

*He was an honest, forthright teacher and knew many things, but in listening to him I never had the impression that his learning was a response to an inner necessity. I could not discern in him Faust's thirst for knowledge, but only the persistent and methodical labor of someone who wants to be informed at any price, and then only because his profession obliges him to be* (14)

reveals something about Eliade's ideal scholar—someone whose work flows naturally out of who he or she is as a person. Thus, the autobiography is a book I turn to whenever I am at an impasse in my studies, or for that matter, in my life, for, like Eliade, I find the two are never very far apart.

While still only in my second year at the university I was told to read *The Sacred and the Profane*, and complied, albeit with extreme reluctance, for at that stage I was concentrating on studying feminist writings, and the prospect of reading any male scholar was not an alluring one. Nevertheless I obtained the book and read it in a single sitting, having realized almost immediately, that whatever else it might be, the book embodied greatness. For good or ill that book, and the inspiring vision of its author are among the main reasons I have continued with my studies.

In *The Sacred and the Profane* Eliade presents many of the concepts he uses to inform and interpret material. He describes his distinction of sacred and profane as "two modes of being in the world" (15). The profane mode is steeped in temporality, confined by the limits of finitude; it is relative and one-dimensional, while the realm of the sacred, which is contiguous to it and can be seen at times to intersect, is atemporal, limitless, multivalent, and powerful (16). We are introduced to the idea of an hierophany, "a manifestation of the sacred... an event in which something sacred shows itself to us". Eliade explains that the sacred may be revealed in natural objects, like stones or trees, but that in
worshipping either, we do not worship these objects as stones or trees but as occasions in which the sacred converges with ordinary profane reality, and reveals itself to us (17). For Eliade, these convergences denote a breaking of planes (18), an interruption of the “homogeneity of space” by the absolute. Moreover,

*The manifestation of the sacred ontologically founds the world. In the homogeneous and infinite expanse, in which no point of reference is possible and hence no orientation can be established, the hierophany reveals an absolute fixed point, a center* (19).

Persons in traditional cultures actively seek this center and therefore create sacred space by constructing dwelling places which emphasize a central axis, and which are frequently open to the sky. Thus the dwelling place (as well as the dweller) is ritually located at the center of the world, the *axis mundi*—the dwelling itself is an *imago mundi* (20). On account of its central opening, the intersection of the horizontal by the vertical is permitted, thereby casioning the entrance of the sacred and the transformation of ordinary profane space (21).

Eliade maintains that each creative act performed by human beings, including those of exploration and of founding or claiming previously unoccupied, unnamed land, constitutes a repetition of the acts of the gods *ab origine* (22); on this view, we could say that *homo faber* is, by necessity, *homo religiosus* (23). Since the creation of the world by the gods involved a series of normative acts performed on chaotic material, “It follows that every construction or fabrication has the cosmogony as paradigmatic model. The creation of the world becomes the archetype of every creative human gesture, whatever its plane of reference may be” (24).

By means of this periodic recreation of the cosmogonic acts of the gods, not only space, but time as well, becomes transformed. As I have explained, Eliade views the mode of the profane as that of historical time, while the sacred has no duration whatsoever; it is the eternal present (25). Although this is discussed in *The Sacred and the Profane*, Eliade develops it at greater length in *Cosmos and History*:

*Just as profane space is abolished by the symbolism of the Center, which projects any temple, palace, or building into the same central point of mythical space, so any meaningful act performed by archaic man, any real act, i.e., any repetition of an archetypal gesture, suspends duration, abolishes profane time, and participates in mythical time* (26) (27) (28).

And, in addition:

*...insofar as an act (or an object) acquires a certain reality through the repetition of certain paradigmatic gestures, and acquires it through that alone, there is an implicit abolition of profane time, of duration, of “history”: and he who reproduces the exemplary gestures thus finds himself transported into the mythical epoch in which its revelation took place* (29).
As far as I know, *The Forge and the Crucible* is the only book apart from those of C.G. Jung in which the mythic dimension of alchemy is acknowledged and thus alchemy can be interpreted accordingly. Here Eliade examines the origins of alchemy and argues that we can trace these to the ancient practices surrounding mining and metallurgy (30). His elucidation of their complex connections is not limited to European alchemy, but extends to a survey of similar relations within the alchemical traditions of India and China (31).

Both furnace and mine were associated with female principles and functions. The innermost depths of a feminized earth was the source of ore, thereby evoking the womb; conditions within the enclosed heat of the furnace are similarly evocative of the womb (32). Furthermore, Eliade suggests that because ores themselves were “sexualized”, i.e., some were considered male and others female, this may help to account for “certain metallurgical taboos relating to sex”. Because these were combined during the smelting process, “smelting, being a form of creation, necessarily implies the prior union of male and female elements” (33). This helps substantiate his hypothesis, since we know from the alchemical manuscripts that the resolution of the alchemical *coincidentia oppositorum* was frequently symbolized under the form of the hierogamy (34).

Both metallurgist and alchemist also assumed the functions of various divinities. The smiths were called “masters of fire”. Fire was sacred, it was a manifestation of the divine; thus those who learned what its powers were and understood its capabilities were themselves considered akin to the divine (35). The smiths and the alchemists were also identified with creators. From molten metal the smiths produced beautifully formed objects. From carefully heated vessels, in which the alchemists had placed base metals, sprang the ultimate synthesis, the fruit of the hierogamic union of opposites (36)(37). All these are creative efforts which recall Marduk’s struggle with the formlessness of Tiamat to create the cosmos (38).

Moreover, the approximation and acceleration of the earth’s process in the alchemical laboratory can be viewed as a struggle against temporality. Since alchemy was a way of recreating sacred space, it constituted a deliberate invitation to the sacred to enter the realm of everyday, desacralized experience; since the sacred is understood by Eliade as atemporal, it is consistent to argue, as he does, that the alchemical quest was a means of overcoming Time itself (39)(40).

J. Zwi Werblowsky probably did not direct his statement at the Marburg conference toward Eliade, but since a number of scholars have specifically attacked the Eliadean approach, I turn now to Guilford Dudley’s *Religion on Trial*, which contains a summary of those criticisms and a proposal he hopes can break the methodological stalemate.
After familiarizing us with important aspects of the methodology debate Dudley proceeds to the criticism. He refers to Edmund Leach’s review ‘‘Sermons By a Man on a Ladder’’ in the New York Review of Books (41), calling it ‘‘one of the most damning assaults on another man’s scholarship that has ever appeared in that publication’’. Leach, writes Dudley, ‘‘accuses Eliade of ‘bade history’, ‘bad ethnology’, ‘bad psychology’, ‘confusion of terms’, and finally implie[s] that Eliade is really a shaman in scholar’s clothing’’ (42).

Leach’s review is certainly less tactful than one might have hoped for. For example, he cites a passage from Shamanism in which Eliade had written: ‘‘Recent researches have clearly brought out the ‘shamanic’ elements in the religion of the paleolithic hunters. Horst Kirchner has interpreted the celebrated reliefs at Lascaux...’’ (43) and explains that ‘‘most readers will believe him simply because it fits the argument... there are in fact no ‘reliefs’ at Lascaux and... no one has the slightest idea why the paintings we made’’.

I agree that the phrase ‘‘clearly brought out’’ is too strong. However, Eliade continues by saying how Kirchner ‘‘considers that certain mysterious objects found in prehistoric sites... are drumsticks. If this interpretation is accepted...’’ (44) When we read the passage in context, I think it becomes much less certain whether Eliade is trying to substitute ‘soft’ undocumented speculation for ‘hard’ documented fact; instead, we find that he himself calls what he is suggesting an interpretation. Thus, the paintings with their possibly ‘‘shamanic elements’’, along with drumstick-like objects which have been associated with shamanism in other contexts are offered here as part of that interpretation. The sense conveyed is that Eliade thinks it might eventually be fruitful, which, on the face of it anyway, hardly seems damning.

In a recent discussion it was observed that Leach’s criticism amounted to a ‘‘broadside’’, an onslaught of such magnitude directed at so many levels of Eliade’s work (and person) that the discovery of any common ground was most probably impossible (45). This is unfortunate of course because it can effectively function to end speculation concerning the possibility that these strange works at Lascaux indeed show evidence of shamanism.

Before continuing, I cannot resist pointing out that when Leach took Eliade to task over the latter’s misrepresentation of the decorations at Lascaux he demonstrated ignorance about the meaning of the term ‘relief’. This term not only designates works consisting of raised portions which are set against a background, but includes those that are only apparently set in relief. Perhaps if Leach had been more of a generalist himself he might have known this.

After citing some negative comments made by other anthropologists with regard to Eliade (none of whom come as close to the virulence
embodied by Leach's review). Dudley turns to historian Hans Penner, who "sees in Eliade's program a total surrender of the hope of objectivity" (46). Dudley quotes from a lecture entitled "Creating a Brahman: a Structural Approach to Religion", delivered by Penner at a symposium on "Methodology and World Religions" (47). The lecture represents admittedly preliminary attempts to analyze the Hindu upanayana ritual in terms of the structure of relations between certain elements in the ritual. For Penner, the central question is "What is this kind of language and behavior all about" (48), and he presents a helpful summary of two possible approaches one might take to answer that question: essentialism and functionalism. Penner dismisses both for reasons I am still engaged in sorting out; however, his explanation of them culminates in the conclusion that "assertions which are made in both... cannot be verified" (49). In Penner's opinion, an alternative and probably more productive approach would be to utilize a special kind of structuralism developed in tandem with state-of-the-art semantic theory. Here Penner distinguishes semantic theory from other types of linguistic analyses which emphasize syntax. While these can give us accurate information about the units of a particular grammatical structure, they are not able to tell us anything about meaning, or the lack of it, in a given sentence. In contrast, the approach Penner sets forth here will give us "a formal analysis", which will allow us "to construct the formal model which in turn will explain the empirical facts of a religion..." (50). Continuing with an analysis that is partly informed by Van Gennep's theory about rites of passage, Penner articulates a series of pairs derived from the structure of relations among the elements in the upanayana ritual which are then examined as "a series of mediations".

Even this relatively informal analysis "shows us that ritual is more than just the sum of its units. It is a system of communications based upon rules of transformation which allow for both continuity and change" (51).

I regard this are extremely important since, if I understand Penner correctly, an analysis like can provide us with new insight into the nature of ritual process. He has shown us two simultaneously occurring conditions connotated by movements in the ritual: stasis and process. Thus we see that the upanayana ritual is not solely a rite of passage, an event in which transformation takes place, but is at the same time a holding device, in the sense that the ritual also preserves and reinforces the larger systems of which it is only a part. We see that the ritual is a process which, by virtue of itself, also entails stasis (51).

If we consider this however, while it certainly does appear that Penner was able to see these conditions because of the method he used, that alone tells us very little about what they might signify, connote, imply, etc.; we have been informed only of the fact of their presence. In short, he still

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has not 'got at' the meaning of these conditions. Moreover, Penner is by no means unaware of this, for he relates:

*One of the most serious problems is the problem of meaning. Is the structure of the ritual its meaning? Can we integrate form and content? I want to say yes, but realize that this is one of the most difficult questions we face* (51).

In a second essay from the same volume, "The Problem of Semantics in the Study of Religion" (54), there is further indication that Penner would like to equate meaning with structure. This becomes somewhat problematic when we read that he wants to abandon "the simple equation of meaning with reference" (55) at the same time he appears to be on the verge of committing an analogous fallacy. As a matter of fact though, Penner explicitly denies this is the case (56). Space precludes becoming embroiled in such details here, but before continuing I note that the material I have presented here is intended to introduce Penner's own thorough analysis, not replace it. The problems he raises are difficult; many of his arguments are couched in terms of formal logic and are therefore highly technical. In addition, if we were to contemplate involving structuralism and semantic theory in a solution to the methodology problem along the lines he has suggested, much work would have to be done before the ramifications for interpretive approaches like those of Eliade are clear. My primary objection to Penner's analysis though, is that it does not recognize the phenomenon of emergence. This underlying flaw in Penner's approach becomes even more obvious when he relates that he hopes to be able "to postulate a theory which can account for the totality of meaning" (57). Religious ritual is an occasion for the intersection of the sacred and the profane. It is unlikely that the totality of meaning that emerges from this intersection could ever be adequately explained by the kinds of meaning of which Penner's theory speaks.

Just as Penner, Eliade is concerned with meaning, but as we know he does not believe the meaning of religious phenomena is located in data which primarily pertains to their non-religious aspects (58). For example, in a doctoral dissertation written by Stephen Yale we find the following:

*In surveying the beliefs and rituals concerning marriage and sexual behavior Eliade does not try to answer the question of whether the rites or the behavior generated the myths* (59).

Yale is right to complain; Eliade has failed to answer that question because for him it is beside the point. When we examine the passage in *Cosmos and History* that inspired this justified exasperation we see that it demonstrates the aptness of Yale's observation while at the same time it reveals the sort of thing Eliade *is* interested in:
For the purpose of this study, it is of no concern that we should know to what extent marriage rites and the orgy created the myths which justify them. What is important is that both the orgy and marriage constituted rituals imitating divine gestures or certain episodes of the sacred drama of the cosmos – the legitimization of human acts through an extrahuman model. If the myth sometimes followed the rite – for example, preconjugal ceremonial unions preceded the appearance of the myth of the preconjugal relations between Hera and Zeus, the myth which served to justify them – the fact in no wise lessens the sacred character of the ritual. Myth is ‘late’ only as a formulation; but its content is archaic and refers to sacraments – that is, to acts which presuppose an absolute reality, a reality which is extrahuman (60).

Similarly, in The Sacred and the Profane we find additional evidence of Eliade’s primary focus: “But it is not with the morphology of the festival that we are concerned; it is with the structure of the sacred time actualized in festivals” (61).

In each case Eliade is reiterating his view that we must analyze a religious phenomenon on terms of its meaning as a whole, not merely in terms of a single “constituent element”.

Eliade would be the last to deny the value particular approaches can have for deepening our understanding of the meaning of religious phenomena. Yet to consider, for example, only the history of a phenomenon is to consider only one of its aspects:

Stating that a religious datum is always a historical datum does not mean that it is reducible to a non-religious history... 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?” (62)

Eliade is concerned with structure, but structure that is ontologically basic, essential, that pertains to our “specific existential situation of ‘being in the world’” (63). This structure is revealed only at the intersection of the sacred and profane; each represents a different mode of being, and neither mode is apparent unless somehow thrown into relief by means of contrast with the other. Meaning resides in the point of intersection, and it is that structure with which he is concerned.

Eliade bases his approach on a vision of something which is maddeningly elusive. The question we must ask is: Can Eliade’s approach be said to contain any significance?

Even after thoroughly reviewing the criticism levelled against Eliade’s methods, Dudley argues that it can indeed. He admits that Eliade...has failed to offer a methodology that would give the field a unified discipline. Neither has he helped to establish the field as an empirically oriented science... But now we need to ask... In what sense is it a
failure for a historian of religions to use a method that does not rely on empirical verification?

Dudley then goes on to make a radical suggestion: What Eliade and other historians of religions might have long since mounted is a counteroffensive against empirical positivism in the history of religions. To have done so would have been a service for the university ethos as a whole (64).

Dudley thinks this counteroffensive can be launched successfully by utilizing certain insights from “Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes” (65), in which Imre Lakatos has articulated the dynamics of scientific theories.

According to Lakatos, a research program is not a single theory but “a series of theories... usually connected by a remarkable continuity” that makes them coherent, i.e., “which welds them into research programmes”. The methodological framework of research programs “tell[s] us what paths of research to avoid (negative heuristic), and... what paths to pursue (positive heuristic)” (66). Furthermore, each research program possesses a dual character; every research program has a “hard core” of theories which is surrounded by hypotheses which function to deflect inquiry away from the hard core to themselves (67). On account of this function such hypotheses are called its “protective belt” (68). By definition, these are expendable – the whole idea is to spare the hard core so that its full potentiality can be realized.

Dudley believes that Eliade’s system constitutes a research program. In the “hard core” Dudley locates the “postulates of the archaic ontology and the transconsciousness, the dynamics of hierophanies, symbols, and archetypes, and the cosmicization of space and time”. Meanwhile, into the “protective belt” go the hieros gamos, the axis mundi, the Cosmic Tree, and the thesis that religious phenomena are sui generis, along with a host of other Eliadean ideas Dudley considers expendable for, or detrimental to, the hard core (69). Dudley argues that the severity of much of the criticism of Eliade is mitigated if we see that it is often the protective belt rather than the hard core that is criticized.

If we assume that treating the concepts we find in works like The Sacred and the Profane as parts of a research program will really help us evaluate their potential, then several problems arise immediately.

First, it is by no means clear which of Eliade’s concepts should be relegated to the protective belt; Eliade and Dudley might well disagree on this question. Secondly, the assertion that regarding religious phenomena as sui generis should be dispensed with on the grounds that it is not really part of the hard core of Eliade’s program (or at least, should not be, even if Eliade considers it so) remains undecided. There are also similar difficulties related to decisions about the retention or exclusion of the concepts of the axis mundi, the hieros gamos, and the Cosmic
Tree. Essentially, it appears that all of these concepts belong to a general type which Dudley, Penner, et al. dislike. Dudley’s determination that certain concepts should be placed in the hard core derives in part, I think, from the fact that they appear to him to be like the structuralist notions he favors (70). We all need to beware of special pleading here; it is too simple to place what we dislike in Eliade into the protective belt and what attracts us into the hard core. Any decision about what is hard core and what is protective belt will be critical since the framework for future inquiry is contingent on it. Moreover, while Lakatos has discussed the criteria to be used in the selection and formulation of hypotheses for the protective belt, he is careful to note that the hard core develops very slowly; “it does not emerge fully armed like Athene from the head of Zeus”, but “by a long, preliminary process of trial and error”, a process which he explicitly states he does not discuss (71).

I do not know yet whether Lakatos’ concept of a research program can be fruitfully applied to the Eliadean corpus. I suspect that its methodological framework might well be too narrowly construed; it might then be unable to account for the dimension of the sacred as it is understood by Eliade. The question of the validity of Dudley’s proposal to look at Eliade through Lakatos’ eyes has to be confronted squarely.

It is time to take some steps toward resolving the methodological controversies I mentioned at the beginning of this paper. Recent work in epistemology suggests to me that the opposing insights may be reconciled even more readily than their proponents might have believed possible.

With regard to the conflict between the empirical scholars who are wedded to the idea of analyzing objective data, and those who are equally committed to more subjective and interpretive approaches I have to say that in my view it is not possible to compile truly objective data. Such data cannot exist. The selection and gathering of data always involves judgments that are made by the researcher, however minimal these might be. First of all, there must be a decision about what to select. Next comes the choice of categories within to place the facts which have been selected; even decisions regarding appropriate systematization and classification are normative. After that, the use of any descriptive term, even terms of quantity – measure, weight, volume, etc. – are the result of additional judgments. Finally, we have to decide what the data means. Of course, all of these decisions are framed by the particular paradigm we happen to be operating within. (I note that the paradigm of western science is no exception to this (72).

If we grant therefore that some interpretation is necessary, we can proceed to the disagreement over what data historians of religions may properly consider.

Acting on statements like the one Werblowsky made at the Marburg conference for example, would result in the exclusion of certain
philosophical and humanitarian issues from our conferences and our journals. In addition, it would no longer be permissible to formulate interpretations in terms of certain concepts, and we would therefore have to reject personal concepts—'believe', 'want', 'feel', etc., and broadly religious ones—"the sacred", "the holy", etc. To acquiesce in these limitations would make us all accomplices in the formation of a world in which many kinds of creative scholarly achievement—like Mircea Eliade's—were no longer possible.

I want to suggest that instead of protesting the allegedly contaminating presence of concerns and methods that are not universally shared, we could more profitably use our energy to develop a truly comprehensive program that would include a diversity of interests and approaches to the study of religion. An analogous idea would be for specialists and generalists to learn to work with one another so that the efforts of scholars in both groups would be enhanced. Moreover, Brauer's vision of the history of religions as a bridge between the humanities and social sciences should be enlarged to include the sciences as well. I do not envision a bland synthesis in which each discipline loses its unique character; I am suggesting we should endeavor to create a context for communicating across methodological and disciplinary lines. The coherence of this program would derive from a common desire to discover what is, to understand. Imre Lakatos has reminded us that rationality moves slowly, "and even then, fallibly" (73). We should remember also that reason can soar—on the wings of imagination and intuition. Any research program needs to be leavened with a sense of what is possible. We must leave room for our dreams (74).

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(3) For example in Kenneth Boulding's book, The Image (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1956), the author develops the premise that our behavior results from our picture of reality, and asks "What... determines the image?" The material in this book was presented as "new and exciting" to students in a general systems theory seminar, by an instructor who had not, by his own admission, ever read Kant!
(4) Guilford Dudley, *Religion on Trial: Mircea Eliade and His Critics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1977), p. 5. I note too that in Mircea Eliade, *The Quest* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969; reprint edition, 1984), p. 1, he states: “Since *Religionswissenschaft* is not easily translatable into English, we are obliged to use ‘history of religions’ in the broadest sense of the term, including not only history properly speaking but also the comparative study of religions and religious morphology and phenomenology”. And when the Graduate Theological Union selected a name for their new doctoral concentration they chose “History and Phenomenology of Religions”, which suggests some disagreement about where, if at all, the shoe should eventually drop at that institution.


(6) Ibid., pp. 11-12.


(10) Ibid., pp. 21-22.


(14) Ibid., p. 100.


(18) Ibid., pp. 20; 37; 41.

(19) Ibid., p. 21.

(20) Ibid., pp. 43ff.

(21) Ibid., p. 39, “‘our world’ is holy ground because it is the place nearest to heaven, because from here, from our abode, it is possible to reach heaven; hence our world is a high place”.

(22) Ibid., pp. 31; 70.

(23) *Homo faber* is necessarily *homo religiosus* when he or she performs a genuinely creative act. The “desacralized” person of modern culture is rarely capable of such acts; at the least is not prone to perform them.


(25) Ibid., p. 70.

(26) Eliade, *Cosmos and History*, p. 36.

(27) Ibid., pp. 34-35.


(29) Eliade, *Cosmos and History*, p. 35.


(31) Ibid. See pp. 201-225 for a comprehensive bibliography which includes sources in Indian and Chinese alchemy.
(32) Ibid., p. 57.
(33) Ibid., p. 60; cf. p. 48.
(36) Eliade, Forge and Crucible, ibid., p. 37.
(37) Voss, op. cit., pp. 48-49.
(39) Eliade, Forge and Crucible, ibid., pp. 8; 47.
(40) Voss, “Medieval Alchemy”, op. cit., pp. 78-79. The mysterious goal of the alchemical quest was often referred to as the Philosopher's Stone. Among the many benefits that purportedly accrued to anyone fortunate enough to discover it was the promise of eternal youth. Perhaps this belief may be accounted for by Eliade's insight into the significance of ritualized intervention in, and acceleration of, natural processes: if one can hasten time, one can also slow it down.
(42) Dudley, op. cit., p. 37.
(44) Ibid., p. 503.
(45) From a conversation with Stephen Voss.
(48) Ibid., p. 52.
(49) Ibid., p. 59.
(50) Ibid., p. 60.
(51) Ibid., p. 63.
(52) Compare Penner's analysis of the upanayana ritual with Jonathan Z. Smith's account of the function of ritual hunting in “The Bare Facts of Ritual”, Imagining Religion (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).
(53) Penner, “Creating a Brahman”, op. cit., p. 64.
(55) Ibid., p. 92.
(56) Ibid., p. 94.
(57) Ibid.
(60) Eliade, Cosmos and History, op. cit., p. 27.
(61) Eliade, Sacred and Profane, op. cit., p. 88.
(63) Ibid., p. 9.
(64) Dudley, op. cit., p. 119.

(66) Ibid., p. 132.

(67) Ibid.

(68) Ibid.


(70) Dudley also discusses the way in which Eliade’s program relates to what he calls “the French tradition of synchronic analysis”, in which he includes Georges Dumézil, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Michel Foucault. Stating that it is “semantically misleading” call that tradition “structuralist” because of the ambiguity of the term, he nevertheless goes on to say that “there is an intellectual tradition to which the various forms of French structuralism... belong”. Is it Dudley’s intention to pronounce Foucault’s work a “form of French structuralism”? If so, it should be noted that Foucault at any rate, disagreed. Michel Foucault, The Order of Things (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970), p. xiv.

(71) Lakatos, op. cit., p. 133.


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