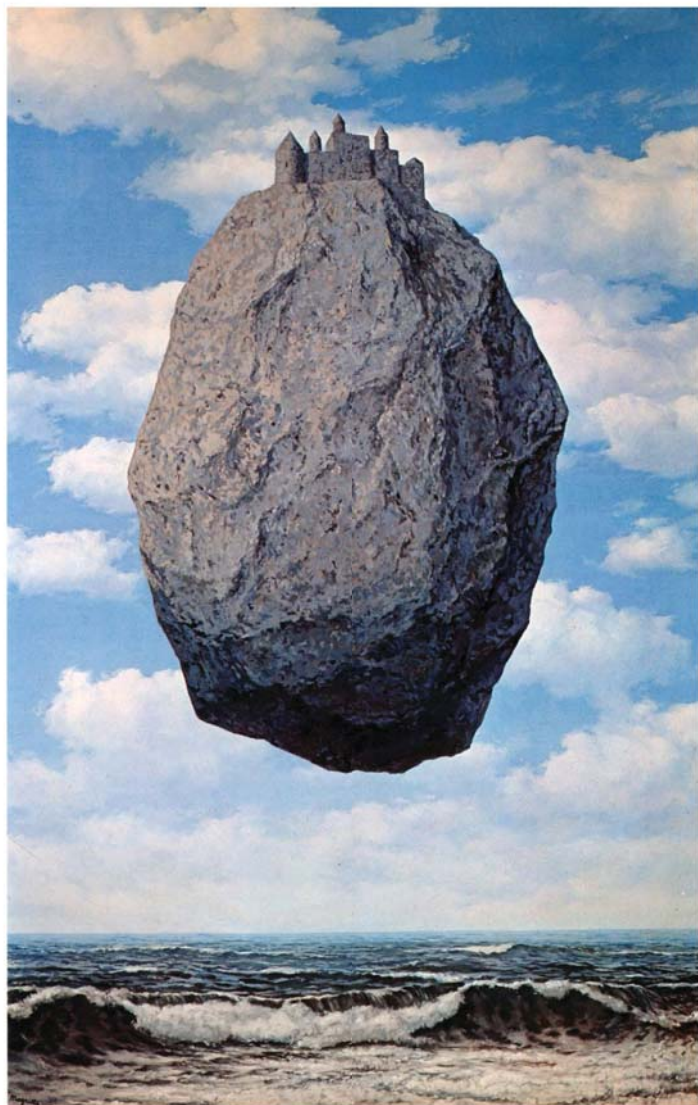


SACRED & PROFANE



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BERSERKER

BOOKS



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Introduction

Rudolf Otto's book *The Sacred* continues to enjoy a memorable reputation. Its success is due to the author's unique and novel perspective; in his work, he did not deal with the concepts of God and religion, but sought to analyse the various forms of religious experience. Otto's psychological insight and dual training in theology and religious history enabled him to unravel the content and specific features of this experience. Leaving aside rational and speculative elements, he focused primarily on the aspects of religion that are inaccessible to the intellect. Following Luther, he understood what the "living God" meant to believers: it was not the God of philosophers, such as Erasmus, nor an "idea", an abstract concept or a moral allegory, but rather a kind of terrifying power manifested in divine "wrath".

In his book *The Idea of the Holy*, Rudolf Otto elaborates on the essential features of this terrifying and irrational experience. He encounters the Holy, the *mysterium tremendum*, the feeling of terror in the face of majesty with overwhelming power; he encounters the pious, fear-tinged reverence felt in the face of the *mysterium fascinans*. Otto calls all these experiences numinous (from the Latin *numen* = deity), because they originate from the manifestation of a part of divine power. The numinous stands outside everything, it is "completely different" and cannot be compared to any human phenomenon or any other phenomenon in the universe. In the presence of the numinous, man is overcome by a feeling of his own complete nothingness, he feels that he is "only a creature" or, as Abraham said to the Lord, "nothing but dust and ashes". The sacred always manifests itself as a reality that is completely different from "natural" realities. Although language expresses the *tremendum*, the *majestas* or the *mysterium fascinans* with words borrowed from nature or from the profane spiritual life of man, this analogical mode of expression stems precisely from our inability to name something completely different: language is forced to clothe everything that transcends normal human experience in words that derive from normal experience.

Rudolf Otto's investigations are still valid today. In this work, however, we choose a different path. We wish to illuminate the phenomenon of the sacred in all its diversity, rather than focusing solely on its irrational aspects. We are interested not only in the relationship between the irrational and rational elements of religion, but also in the sacred as a whole. The first definition of the sacred is as follows: the opposite of the profane.

The sacred manifests itself

We know about the sacred because it reveals itself and proves to be completely different from the profane. We wish to denote this revelation of the sacred with the word *hierophany* (from the Greek *hieros* = sacred; *phainomai* = to show oneself). This is a useful term because it expresses nothing more than what its etymological composition implies: namely, that something sacred is revealed to us.* We could say that the history of religions, from the most primitive to the most highly developed, consists of a large number of *hierophanies*, or manifestations of sacred realities. There is an unbroken continuum from the most elementary *hierophany* (for example, the manifestation of the sacred in an object, such as a stone or a tree) to the highest order of *hierophany* (for Christians, , , God , Jesus , in Christ , , the incarnation of). Always

We are faced with the same mysterious process; the "completely different" reality that does not belong to our world manifests itself in objects that are integral parts of our "natural", "profane" world.

Modern Westerners feel somewhat uncomfortable with this manifestation of sacredness: they find it difficult to comprehend how certain human beings can perceive sacredness in stones or trees. However, we will soon see that this is not a matter of worshipping stones or trees as such. Sacred stones and sacred trees are not revered as stones or trees – they are revered because they are hierophanies, because they manifest something that is no longer stone or tree, but the sacred, the "wholly other".

It cannot be emphasised enough that every hierophany – even the most elementary one

- paradox. Its object, insofar as the sacred manifests itself in it, becomes something "completely different", yet it remains what it is, as it continues to be part of its cosmic environment. The sacred stone remains a stone; apparently (more precisely: from a profane point of view) it is no different from any other stone. However, for those to whom the stone manifests itself as sacred, its immediate reality is transformed into a supernatural reality. In other words, for people who have a religious experience, the whole of nature can manifest itself as cosmic sacredness. In this case, the entire cosmos becomes a hierophany.

People in archaic societies strove to live in the vicinity of sacred or consecrated objects. This aspiration is understandable, because for "primitive" and all pre-modern societies, the sacred was synonymous with power and, ultimately, reality. The sacred: something imbued with being. Sacred power means reality, eternity and potency all at once. The contrast between the sacred and the profane often appears to be a contrast between the real and the unreal or pseudo-real. (Of course, we cannot expect to find these philosophical terms for the real and the unreal in ancient languages.) It is therefore understandable that religious people desire to share in reality and be filled with power.

Our investigation must show that religious people always strive to live in a sacred universe, and consequently their entire experience is different from that of people without religious feelings, those who live in a desacralised world. Let us add, however, that a completely desacralised world, a cosmos, is a new discovery in the history of the human spirit. It is not our task to show through which historical processes and as a result of what changes in spiritual attitudes modern people desacralised their world and transitioned to a profane existence. Let us content ourselves with the observation that desacralisation characterises the entire experience of non-religious people in modern societies, and that as a result, this type of person finds it increasingly difficult to rediscover the dimensions of existence experienced by religious people in ancient societies.

Two types of worldly existence

The subjects of our discussion are: the ritual structure of sacred space and human dwellings, various religious experiences of time, the relationship of religious people to nature and the world of tools, the sanctity of human life itself, and the sacredness that can be attached to its functions (nutrition, sexuality, work). All these discussions will reveal the vast gulf that separates religious experience from the profane. We need only consider what the city and the house, nature, tools and work have become in modern, non-religious society.

religious person, and we immediately understand how he differs from people in ancient societies, or even from peasants living in Christian Europe. For the modern consciousness, a physiological act (eating, sexuality, etc.) is merely a phenomenon of organic life, no matter how many taboos still cling to it today. (Taboos that, for example, compel adherence to certain rules of "proper eating" or prohibit sexual behaviour that is contrary to social morality.) For primitive people, however, such an act is never merely physiological, but a "sacrament": connected with the sacred, or becoming sacred.

The reader will soon see that the sacred and the profane are two modes of being in the world, two existential situations that humans have developed throughout history. These modes of being in the world are not only the subject of religious history and sociology, nor are they merely the subject of historical, sociological, and ethnographic research; the sacred and the profane modes of existence are determined by the different positions occupied by humans in the cosmos, and therefore concern philosophers and all researchers who wish to understand all dimensions of human existence.

For this reason, although the author of this small book is a historian of religion, he does not intend to view his subject solely from the perspective of his own discipline. People in traditional societies are, of course, *homo religiosus*, but their behaviour fits within the framework of general human behaviour and is therefore also the subject of philosophical anthropology, phenomenology and psychology.

In order to illustrate the peculiarities of existence in a world turned towards the sacred, we will list examples selected from a large number of religions from different eras and cultures. Nothing can replace examples and concrete facts. It would be futile to discuss the structure of sacred space without showing, through concrete examples, how such spaces are created and how they differ qualitatively from the profane space surrounding them. Examples for us are provided by the Babylonians, Indians and Chinese, the Kwakiutl tribe^[iii] and other primitive peoples. It is true that, from a cultural-historical point of view, it is not entirely safe to juxtapose religious facts from peoples so distant from each other in space and time. In doing so, we may fall into similar errors as certain 19th-century thinkers, notably Tylor and Frazer,^[iv] who assumed that the human spirit always reacts in the same way to natural phenomena. Cultural ethnology and the history of religion have since shown that this is not always the case: "people's reactions to nature" are often determined much more by culture and, ultimately, by history.

However, we would rather highlight the specific features of the religious experience than its countless variations and differences determined by history. It is as if we wanted to better understand the phenomena of poetry by presenting a series of incongruous examples, quoting Indian, Chinese and Mexican poems alongside Homer, Virgil and Dante; in other words, on the one hand, works that are historically related to each other (Homer, Virgil, Dante), and on the other hand, works that belong to other artistic traditions. From a literary-historical point of view, such juxtapositions must be treated with caution, but they immediately become valuable when we want to describe the phenomenon of poetry as such and show the essential difference between poetic language and everyday language, which is bound to a specific purpose.

The sacred and history

Our main task is to present the specific dimensions of religious experience and show how it differs from secular world experience. We do not intend to dwell on the countless forms that religious world experience has taken over time. It is obvious, for example, that the symbolism and cult of Mother Earth, human and agricultural fertility, the symbolism and cult of female sacredness, etc., could only have developed after the discovery of agriculture, giving rise to a richly structured religious system, and that a pre-agricultural society specialising in hunting could not have experienced the sacredness of Mother Earth in the same way or with the same intensity. There are therefore differences in religious experience that can be explained by economic, cultural and social differences, in short: by history. Nevertheless, the similarities between the behaviour of hunters who once lived a nomadic lifestyle and that of settled farmers seem infinitely more important to us today than the differences that can be found between them: both live in a sacred cosmos, both share in a world sacredness that manifests itself in both the animal and plant worlds. Let us compare their existential situation with that of any member of modern society who lives in a desacralised cosmos, and we will immediately recognise how they differ from each other. At the same time, the validity of comparing religious facts from different cultures becomes clear: all these facts are based on one and the same behaviour - the behaviour of homo religiosus.

This small book can be considered a general introduction to the history of religion, as it describes sacred phenomena and the human condition in a world imbued with religious values. Strictly speaking, however, it is not a work of religious history, as the author did not attempt to embed the examples listed in their respective cultural-historical contexts. This would require several volumes.

Saint-Cloud, April 1956 Mircea
Eliade

I. Sacred Space and the Sacralisation of the World

The Homogeneity of Space and Hierophany

For religious people, space is not homogeneous. It contains fractures and ruptures; it contains parts that are qualitatively different from the rest. "Do not come near here," God says to Moses, "take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground." (Exodus 3:5) There is, therefore, a kind of sacred space, that is, a space "filled with power" and significance, and there are other, non-sacred spaces; consequently, there is no space without structure and solidity, in a word, no "formless" space. Religious people experience this inhomogeneity of space as the contrast between the sacred, i.e. the only real, truly existing space, and everything else that surrounds it as a formless expanse.

The religious experience that space is not homogeneous is a primal experience that can be identified with a kind of "world creation". This is not a matter of theoretical reasoning, but rather a primarily religious experience that precedes all reflection on the world, because it creates the "fixed point", the central axis from which all future orientation originates. Since the sacred hierophany gives a sign of itself, not only does a break occur in the homogeneity of space, but beyond that, an absolute reality is also revealed, which contrasts with the non-reality of the infinite vastness surrounding it. The world is ontologically grounded by the sacred manifestation. In a boundless, homogeneous space without landmarks or orientation, hierophany reveals a kind of absolute "fixed point" or "centre".

It is understandable that the discovery of this sacred space – this revelation – has great existential value for religious people: because nothing can begin or happen without prior orientation; however, orientation requires some kind of solid point of reference. Religious people have therefore always strived to settle "at the centre of the world". We must establish the world in order to live in it – yet no world can be created in the "chaos" of the homogeneity and relativity of profane space. The discovery or projection of a fixed point, a "centre", is synonymous with the creation of the world; we will see later, with convincing examples, that ritual orientation and the construction of some kind of sacred space have world-creating significance.

For the layman, however, space is homogeneous and neutral, not divided into qualitatively different parts. Geometric space can be divided and delimited in all directions, but its structure does not imply any qualitative differentiation, and consequently no orientation either – just think of any classic definition of space in geometry. Of course, we must strictly distinguish between two things: the concept of homogeneous and neutral geometric space, and the experienced "profane" space, which is the opposite of the equally experienced sacred space, and this is the only thing that interests us here. We do not need to deal here with the concept of homogeneous space, which has been a component of philosophical and scientific thought since ancient times, or with the history of the concept. We are interested in how space is experienced by a non-religious person, that is, someone who rejects the sacredness of the world and accepts only a "profane" existence, purified of all religious presuppositions.

Let us immediately add that, in reality, there is no such thing as a completely secular existence. A person who chooses a secular life, no matter how much they desacralise the world, will never

completely rid themselves of religious behaviour. This will become even clearer in the course of our discussion, and we will see that even in the most desacralised existence, traces of the religious evaluation of the world are evident.

For now, however, let us ignore this aspect of the problem and limit ourselves to comparing the two experiences in question: the experience of sacred and profane space. The manifestation of the sacred provides a "fixed point" for man, enabling him to orient himself in chaotic homogeneity, to "establish the world" and to truly live. Profane experience, on the other hand, insists on the homogeneity and relativity of space. In this space, true orientation is impossible because the "fixed point" is no longer ontologically unambiguously established: it appears and disappears according to the circumstances of the moment. In fact, there is no longer a "world"; only fragments of a shattered universe exist, an infinite number of more or less neutral "places," formless masses among which humans move back and forth, driven by the obligations of life in industrial society.

However, even within the profane experience of space, there are values that are reminiscent of the inhomogeneity characteristic of the religious experience of space. For example, there are places that are qualitatively different from others: home, the landscape surrounding one's first love, or certain places in a foreign city that we visited in our youth. Even for completely non-religious people, these places retain their special, "unique" significance: they are the "sacred places" of their private world. It is as if, even for non-religious people, such places reveal a reality that differs from the reality of their everyday existence.

We are dealing here with the "crypto-religious" behaviour of profane people. In the course of our investigations, we will find further examples of such a softening and desacralisation of religious values and religious behaviour, and we will attempt to understand their significance.

Theophanies and signs

To illustrate the inhomogeneity of space as experienced by religious people, we could mention religion of one's choice. Let us choose a very obvious example, say a church in a modern city. For the believer, this church exists in a different space than the street in which it is located. The door leading into the church interior indicates that spatial continuity is broken here. The threshold rising between the two spaces also signifies the gap between the two modes of existence, the profane and the religious. It is both the barrier, the dividing line, the boundary that separates the two worlds, and the paradoxical place where these two worlds meet and where the transition from the profane to the sacred world can take place.

The threshold of human dwellings also serves a similar ritual function, which is why it has always been considered so important. Numerous rituals accompany the crossing of the threshold of a house: people bow before it, throw themselves to the ground, touch it reverently with their hands, etc. The threshold has "guardians", gods and spirits who prevent human enemies and demonic and disease-causing powers from entering. Sacrifices are made to the guardian deities on the threshold. In some ancient Eastern cultures (Babylon, Egypt, Israel), judgements were pronounced while standing on the threshold. The threshold and the door directly and concretely indicate the end of spatial continuity. This is where their great religious significance lies: they are both symbols and mediators of transition.

All this explains why the church is located in a completely different space than the surrounding residential buildings and workplaces. People leave the profane world behind when they enter the enclosed sacred area. In early cultures, this possibility of transcendence was expressed through various visual representations of an opening: here, in the enclosed sacred area, humans could come into contact with the gods; therefore, there had to be an "door" leading upwards, through which the gods could descend to earth and humans could symbolically ascend to heaven. We will soon see that this is characteristic of many religions: the sacred space forms the "opening" upwards and ensures contact with the world of the gods.

Every sacred space is connected to some kind of hierophany: holiness breaks through in it, highlighting a specific area from its cosmic environment and changing it qualitatively. When Jacob, fleeing to Haran, saw a ladder in his dream that touched the sky, with angels ascending and descending on it, and heard the voice of God from above saying, "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham, your father," he awoke and cried out in fear: "How terrible is this place. This place is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." He took the stone he had placed under his head, set it up as a pillar, poured oil on it, and called that place Bethel, meaning "house of God." (Genesis 28:12-19). The expression "gate of heaven" contains a rich and complex system of symbols: theophany sanctifies a place precisely by making it "open" upwards, and as a point of paradoxical transition from one mode of existence to another, it connects it with heaven. Later on, we will find even better examples of sacraments that are "gates of the gods," that is, places of transition between heaven and earth.

In many cases, even in the strict sense of the word, there is no need for theophany or hierophany; a sign that indicates the sanctity of the place is sufficient. "The marabout (priest) who founded El-Hemelt towards the end of the 16th century spent the night at a spring and hid his walking stick in the ground. The next morning, when he wanted to continue his journey and take his stick with him, he saw that it had taken root and sprouted. He saw this as a sign of God's will and settled in this place." Because the sign, which has religious significance, carries something absolute and puts an end to relativity and confusion. It imperiously proclaims itself as something sacred that is not of this world, and thus sets a direction and prescribes a certain behaviour.

If there are no signs anywhere, people create them. They use a kind of incantation, for example, with the help of animals; the animals show them the place that is suitable for founding a sanctuary or village. In such cases, sacred forms and figures are evoked to enable orientation in a homogeneous space. They long for a sign that will put an end to the tension and fear born of disorientation, that is, create an absolute point of reference. For example, they take a wild animal, such as a deer, and wherever it is killed, they erect a sanctuary. Or they release a domestic animal, such as a bull, search for it for a few days, and sacrifice it at the place where it is found. Then they erect an altar and build a settlement around it. In all these cases, animals reveal the sanctity of the place, which means that people do not freely choose the sacred place, but can only search for it and find it with the help of mysterious signs.

These few examples show that a sacred place can manifest itself in different ways for religious people. In all these cases, hierophany broke the homogeneity of space and revealed a kind of "fixed point" within it. However, since religious people can only live in an atmosphere saturated with sacredness, we will encounter numerous techniques that serve to consecrate space. As we have seen, the sacred is not at all

real power, influence, the source of life and fertility. The desire of religious people to live in holiness means that they want to live in objective reality and do not want to remain prisoners of the endless relativity of subjective experiences: they want to live in a real and influential world, not an illusory one. This desire is most strongly expressed in the religious person's need to live in a sanctified world, that is, in sacred space. This need compels them to develop orientation techniques that actually serve to create sacred space. However, we should not believe that this is a human creation, that through their efforts humans can make a space sacred. The ritual through which sacred space is created is only effective insofar as it evokes the work of the gods. However, in order to better understand the necessity of the ritual creation of sacred space, we must first deal with the traditional conception of the "world", and then it immediately becomes clear to us that for the religious person, every "world" is a "sacred world".

Chaos and cosmos

One characteristic feature of traditional societies is the contrast, which they take for granted, between the area they inhabit and the unknown and undefined space surrounding it. The area in which they live is the "world" (more precisely, "our world"), the cosmos; the rest is no longer the cosmos, but a kind of "other world", a strange, chaotic space inhabited by ghosts, demons and "strangers" (who are identified with demons and the souls of the dead).

At first glance, it seems that the spatial rupture mentioned above can be traced back to the contrast between the inhabited, orderly, "cosmised" area and the unknown space outside it, i.e. the contrast between "cosmos" and "chaos". However, we will see that each inhabited area is only "cosmos" because it has been previously sanctified by the gods or is connected to the world of the gods. The "world" (i.e. "our world") is a universe in which the sacred has already manifested itself and in which it has therefore become possible and repeatable to break through the planes.

It is easy to see that the religious element already carries within itself the "cosmological element": the sacred declares absolute reality and thus enables orientation by setting boundaries, thereby creating world order and establishing the world.

This is clearly evident in the Vedic[vii] land acquisition rituals: land acquisition only becomes lawful by erecting a fire altar consecrated to Agni. "It is said that man settled down as soon as he erected a fire altar (gārhapatya), and all those who erect a fire altar have settled down lawfully." (Satapatha Brāhmaṇa VII, I, I, 1-4.) By erecting the fire altar, Agni becomes present, and thus a connection with the world of the gods is established: the altar area becomes a sacred space. However, the meaning of the ritual is even more complex. Only when we consider all its details can we understand why the consecration of an area is considered a cosmic act. The raising of the Agni altar is nothing less than the repetition of creation on a microcosmic scale. The water used to mix the clay is identified with the primordial water; the clay, which forms the base of the altar, is the earth itself; the side walls represent the air, and so on. While building the altar, verses are recited that indicate which part of the cosmos is being created (Satapatha Brāhmaṇa I, 9, 29, etc.). The erection of the fire altar, therefore, is identified with cosmogony, which alone validates the occupation of the earth.

The unknown, alien, uninhabited (in the common sense: not yet inhabited by "us") territory remains in a state of chaotic fluidity, like a larva. When humans occupy it, they transform it into a cosmos through the ritual repetition of cosmogony. What is to become "our world" must first be "created", and the model for all creation is the creation of the universe by the gods. When the Scandinavian settlers occupied Iceland (landnáma),^[viii] and began to cultivate its land, they did not consider their undertaking to be either an independent achievement or profane human labour. In their eyes, their action was merely a repetition of some ancient deed: the transformation of chaos into cosmos through the act of divine creation. When they cultivated the barren land, they were in fact repeating the deed of the gods who created order out of chaos and gave it structure, form and norms.*

Whether people cultivate uncultivated land or conquer and occupy an area already inhabited by "other" human beings, the ritual of taking possession must always and in every case repeat the cosmogony. Because in the eyes of ancient society, anything that is not "our world" is not yet a "world" at all. We only make an area "ours" when we "recreate" it, that is, consecrate it. This religious attitude towards unknown lands was preserved even in the West until the beginning of the modern era. The Spanish and Portuguese conquistadors took possession of the lands they discovered and conquered in the name of Jesus Christ. By erecting a cross, the territory was consecrated and thus, in a sense, "reborn". For through Christ, "the old has passed away, and behold, the new has come" (2 Cor. 5:14). The cross "renewed" and "recreated" the newly discovered land.

The consecration of a place as a repetition of cosmogony

It is important to understand that making unknown areas cosmic always means sanctification: those who create order in a space repeat the exemplary work of the gods. The close connection between making something cosmic and consecration can already be seen at a primitive cultural level, for example among the Australians, whose economy is based on gathering and hunting. According to the tradition of the Achilpa^[ix] - an Arunta tribe - in mythical times, the divine being Numbakula "cosmised" their territory, created their forefather, and established their institutions. Numbakula made the sacred pole (kauwa-auwa) from a gum tree, consecrated it with blood, climbed it, and disappeared into the sky. This pole is the axis of the world, because the earth around it becomes habitable, thus transforming into a "world". This is why the sacred pole plays such an important ritual role among the Achilpa; they always take it with them on their nomadic wanderings and always travel in the direction indicated by the pole. In this way, even while constantly changing location, the Achilpa can always remain in their "own world" and at the same time be connected to the sky into which Numbakula disappeared. If the pillar breaks, it means disaster, to a certain extent the end of the "world", a fall back into chaos. Spencer and Gillen report that the entire tribe was overcome with mortal terror when the sacred stake was once broken; the tribe members wandered around in circles for a while, then finally sat down on the ground to die.*

This example clearly shows that the sacred stake plays both a cosmological and a salvific role. In kauwa-auwá, on the one hand, it embodies the stake with which Numbakula made the world cosmic, and on the other hand, the Achilpas believe that it keeps them connected to the celestial realm. However, it is only this constant connection that makes human existence possible. The Achilpa's "world" only becomes their world to the extent that it can

evoke the cosmos arranged and sanctified by Numbakula. It is impossible to live without an "opening" to the transcendent, in other words, in "chaos". If the connection with the afterlife is lost, existence in the world also becomes impossible - and the Achilpaks no longer want to live.

Settling down somewhere means consecrating that area. For settled peoples, who, unlike nomads, wish to settle down once and for all in a particular place, such a decision is vital, on which the existence of the entire community depends. Settling in a place, furnishing and inhabiting it, are actions that presuppose an existential choice, namely the choice of the universe that they "want to create" and thus take upon themselves. However, this "universe" is always an imitation of the exemplary universe that the gods have already created and in which they themselves dwell: the human universe thus shares in the sanctity of the divine work.

The sacred stake of Achilpák "holds up" their world and ensures their connection to the heavens. We encounter this cosmological image again and again: world pillars hold up the heavens and at the same time open the way to the world of the gods. The Celts and Germanic peoples preserved the cult of such sacred pillars until the adoption of Christianity. We know from the *Chronicum Laurissense brevè*, written around 800, that in one of Charlemagne's wars against the Saxons (772) he had the "famous Irminsul", a local cultic and sacred tree formation, destroyed in the city of Eresburg.[x] Around 860, Rudolf of Fulda added to this with a comment that this famous pillar was the pillar of the "universe" that carried everything (*universalis columna quasi sustinens omnia*).[xi] We encounter the same cosmological image among the Romans (Horace: *Odes*, III. 3.), in ancient India, where they speak of the *skambhá*, the pillar of the world (*Rigveda* 1, 105; X, 89. 4., etc.), and even among the inhabitants of the Canary Islands and in cultures as distant from each other as the Kwakiutl and the Nad'a on the island of Flores.[xii] The Kwakiutl believe that a copper rod cuts through the three cosmic levels (underworld, earth and sky); where it penetrates the sky, there is the "gateway to the upper world". The visible image of this world pillar in the sky is the Milky Way. Humans repeat and imitate the work of the gods, the universe, on a proportional scale: for example, the *axis mundi*, visible in the sky as the Milky Way, appears in cult buildings as a sacred pole, a ten to twelve metre long cedar trunk, more than half of which protrudes from the roof of the cult building. This pillar plays a major role in ceremonies because it lends the house a cosmic structure. In ritual songs, the house is called "our world," and the initiates who live in it make it known: "I am at the centre of the world... I am at the pillar of the world..." etc.* We find the same identification between the world pillar and the sacred pillar, as well as between the cultic building and the universe, in the aforementioned nad'as. The sacrificial stake is called the "heavenly stake," and it holds up the sky.**

The "centre of the world"

The cry of the Kwakiutl neophytes, "I am at the centre of the world!", reveals one of the deepest meanings of sacred space. Where hierophany broke through the planes, an "opening" was created both upwards (to the divine world) and downwards (to the lower regions, the world of the dead). The three cosmic planes - earth, sky and underworld - come into contact with each other. As we have just seen, this connection is sometimes expressed by the image of a pillar of light that holds and connects the sky and the earth, and whose base is rooted in the lower world (the underworld). This cosmic pillar can only stand in the centre of the world, because the entire inhabitable world spreads out around it. In all this, we must therefore see the consequences of religious ideas and cosmological images that are interrelated and expressed in the "system" *ki*, which the traditional societies "world system"

We can say that: a) a sacred place breaks the homogeneity of space; b) this break is symbolised by an "opening" that allows passage from one cosmic region to another (from heaven to earth and from earth to the underworld); c) the connection with the heavens can be expressed in various images, all of which refer to the axis mundi: a pillar (universalis columna), a ladder (Jacob's ladder), a mountain, a tree, a branch, etc.; d) c: the "world" (i.e. our world) extends around the world axis, and consequently our world is located at the "centre" of the axis, the "navel of the earth", and this is the centre of the world.

A large number of myths, rituals and religious ideas are based on this traditional "world system". We do not wish to list them all here, but will limit ourselves to a few examples from different cultures that are suitable for illustrating the role played by sacred space in traditional societies. (For the purposes of our investigation, it makes no difference whether this sacred space appears as a sacred place, a cult building, a city or the world.) Everywhere we encounter a system of symbols representing the centre of the world, which in most cases can shed light on religious behaviour towards the space "in which we live".

Let us first take an example that immediately illustrates the unity and diversity of this symbolic system: the cosmic mountain. We have already mentioned that the mountain is one of the images that represent the connection between heaven and earth, and thus it also embodies the centre of the world. Such mythical or real mountains, located at the centre of the world, play a role in many cultures. Examples include Mount Meru in India, Haraberezaiti in Iran, the mythical "mountain of countries" in Mesopotamia, and Mount Gerizim, also known as "the navel of the earth", in Palestine. As an axis mundi connecting the earth to the sky, the mountain touches the sky to a certain extent and thus represents the highest point in the world; as a result, the country surrounding it, "our world", is considered the highest of all countries. According to Jewish tradition, Palestine was not flooded by the deluge because it was the highest country on earth.* According to Islamic tradition, the highest place on earth is the Kaaba, because "the North Star testifies that it is located opposite the centre of the heavens".** For Christians, Golgotha is at the top of the cosmic mountain. All these religious ideas express one and the same deep religious feeling: "our world" is holy ground because it is closest to heaven, because heaven can be reached from here, from us, and that is why our world is a "high-ranking place". From a cosmological point of view, this religious idea is expressed in the projection of this privileged area (which is our area) onto the summit of the cosmic mountain. It was only later reflections that led to all kinds of conclusions, such as the one just mentioned, according to which the holy land of Palestine will not be flooded by the deluge.

This symbolism of the centre explains further groups of cosmological images and religious beliefs. Let us mention only the most important ones:

a) holy cities and shrines are located at the centre of the world; b) temples are imitations of cosmic mountains, and they form the link between earth and sky; c) the foundations of temples extend deep into the underworld. A few examples will suffice to illustrate this. We will then attempt to summarise all these different aspects of one and the same symbolic system in order to gain a clearer understanding of the connections between these traditional worldviews.

The capital of the Chinese emperor is located at the centre of the world, where the shadow of the sundial does not fall at noon on the summer solstice.* The same symbolism is associated with the sanctuary in Jerusalem; the rock on which it stood was "the navel of the earth" . Nikolaus von Thverva Icelandic pilgrim, who the 12th

visited Jerusalem in the 12th century, he wrote the following about the Holy Sepulchre: "There is the centre of the world, where on the summer solstice the sun's rays fall vertically from the sky."** We encounter the same idea in Iran: the Iranian land (Airyanam Vaejah) is the centre and heart of the world. Just as the heart is located in the centre of the body, "the land of Iran is more valuable than any other country because it is in the centre of the world".*** This is why Shiz, the "Jerusalem" of the Iranians (which was at the centre of the world), was considered the source of royal power and the birthplace of Zarathustra[xiii].****

The names of the Babylonian towers and shrines themselves testify to the fact that temples were identified with cosmic mountains and embodied the "bond" between earth and sky: "the mountain of the house", "the house of the mountain of all countries", "the mountain of storms", "the bond between heaven and earth", etc. The ziggurat[xiv] was in fact a cosmic mountain; its seven floors represented the seven planets; when the priest climbed it, he reached the top of the universe. Similar symbolism explains the enormous temple complex built at Borobudur in Java: it was erected as an artificial mountain. Climbing this temple is equated with an ecstatic journey to the centre of the world; as soon as pilgrims reach the top terrace, they break through the planes and enter a "pure region" that transcends the profane world.

Dur-an-ki, "the bond between heaven and earth," was the name of many Babylonian shrines (we encounter such names in Nippur, Larsa, Sippar, etc.). Babylon had many names, including "the house of the foundation of heaven and earth" and "the bond between heaven and earth." In Babylon, however, the earth was also connected to the regions below the world, because the city was built on bâb-apsî, "the gate of apsu", where apsu represents the waters of chaos, the state before creation. We encounter the same thing in Jewish tradition: the rocks of the Jerusalem sanctuary reached deep into the tehôm, which is the Hebrew equivalent of apsu. Just as we find the "gate of apsu" in Babylon, so the rock of the Jerusalem temple closed the "mouth of tehôm".*

Apsu and Tehôm symbolise both the "water chaos", the cosmic matter that has not yet taken any form, and the world of death – that which precedes life and follows it. The "gate of Apsu" and the rock that closes the "mouth of Tehôm" mark not only the intersection and connection between the underworld and the earth, but also the difference between the ontological orders of these two cosmic planes. The tehôm and the temple rock that seals its "mouth" are located on different levels; this is where the virtual passes into the formed, death into life. The watery chaos that preceded creation also symbolises a return to formlessness, a return to the larval existence brought about by death. In a sense, the regions beneath the world resemble the barren and unknown landscapes surrounding the inhabited area: the lower world, above which our "cosmos" rises, corresponds to the chaos that reigns beyond the boundaries of our cosmos.

"Our world" is always at the centre

It follows from all this that the "real world" is always located in the "middle", in the "centre", because only there can the planes break through, and thus only there can a connection be established between the three cosmic zones. It is always about the entire cosmos: no matter how large or small the cosmos may be, an entire country (e.g. Palestine), a city (Jerusalem), a holy place (the Temple in Jerusalem) – it is equally a reflection of the world, imago mundi. Josephus Flavius wrote about the symbolism of the temple, saying that the courtyard represented the "sea" (i.e. the underworld), the holy house represented the earth, and the sanctuary represented the sky (Ant. Jud. III, 7, 7). We have seen that the imago mundi and the inhabited world within

The "centre" is repeated over and over again. Palestine, Jerusalem and the universe separately and competitively represent the image of the universe and the centre. This multiplicity of "centres" and this increasingly modest repetition of the image of the world are special characteristics of traditional societies.

From this we must conclude that religious people wanted to live as close as possible to the centre of the world. They knew that their country was in the middle of the earth, that their city was the navel of the universe, and above all that the temple and the palace were the true centres of the world, but beyond that, they also wanted their own house to be at the centre as an *imago mundi*. And we will see that, in the eyes of religious people, their homes were indeed at the centre of the world and were also microcosmic reflections of the universe. In other words, people in traditional societies could only live in a space that was "open" upwards, where symbols ensured the breakthrough of planes, thus making contact with the other, otherworldly world possible. The sanctuary – the true "centre" – was, of course, very close by, in their own city, and they only had to enter the temple to come into contact with the world of the gods. However, people demanded to always live in the centre, like the Achilps, who always carried the sacred stake, the axis mundi, with them so that they would not stray from the centre and remain in contact with the supernatural world. No matter how large the space in which they feel at home – country, city, village, house – religious people always want to live in a complete, orderly world, a *cosmos*.

The universe is born from its own centre, and the centre is formed around the "navel". Thus, for example, according to the *Rigveda* (X, 249), the universe is created and develops from a single central core. The Jewish tradition expresses this even more clearly: "The Holy One created the world as an embryo. Just as an embryo grows from the navel, so God began the creation of the world at the navel, and from there it spreads in all directions." And since the "navel of the earth" and the centre of the world is the holy land, Yoma[xv] says of it: "The creation of the world began at Zion."* Rabbi Bin Gorion said that the rock in Jerusalem "is called the foundation stone of the earth, or the navel of the earth, because the whole earth sprang from it."** And since the creation of man repeats the creation of the world, the first man had to be created "in the navel of the earth" (Mesopotamian tradition), in the centre of the world (Iran), in paradise, which was "in the navel of the earth", or in Jerusalem (Judeo-Christian tradition). All this seems entirely consistent when we consider that it is only at the centre that the planes break through, and only here does space become sacred and thus real. Creation means an excess of reality, that is, the intrusion of sacredness into the world.

Therefore, cosmogony is a model for all construction and creation. The creation of the world becomes the archetype of all human creation. We have already seen that settlement in a country repeats cosmogony. Seeing the cosmogonic significance of the centre, it is now easier to understand why all human settlements repeat the creation of the world from a single centre (the "navel"). Just as the universe develops from a single centre and spreads out towards the four corners of the earth, so the village is created around a single crossroads. On the island of Bali, as in many other parts of Asia, before building a new village, they first look for a natural junction where two roads intersect at right angles. The square constructed around the centre is a kind of *imago mundi*. The division of the village into four sectors, which is also a consequence of the appropriate division of the community, corresponds to the division of the universe into four cardinal points. An empty space is often left in the centre of the village, where the

cultic building, whose roof represents the sky. (In some cases, the sky is also represented by a tree or a mountain.)*

The cosmic symbolism of the village is repeated in the structure of the sanctuary or cultic building. In Varopen, New Guinea, the "men's house" is located in the centre of the village; its roof represents the vault of heaven, and the four walls correspond to the four cardinal directions. In Ceram, the sacred stone of the village symbolises the sky, while the four stone pillars supporting it represent the four pillars of the sky.** Similar ideas are found among the Algonquin and Sioux tribes. The sacred hut, where their initiation takes place, represents the universe. Its roof symbolises the sky, its floor the earth, and its four walls the four directions of cosmic space. The ritual structure of the space is emphasised by triple symbolism: the four doors, four windows and four colours represent the four directions of the sky. The erection of the sacred hut repeats the cosmogony, because in this small building the world takes shape.*

It should come as no surprise that a similar concept existed among the ancient Italians and Germans. The projection of the four horizons from a single point is an ancient and widespread idea. The Roman mundus was a circular ditch divided into four parts; it was both a reflection of the cosmos and a model of human settlement. The suggestion that the term *Roma quadrata* should be understood not as a square but as a division into four parts was rightly made.** The mundus was apparently identified with the omphalos, the navel of the earth; the city (urbs) rose in the middle of the *orbis terrarum*. It could be proven that similar ideas explain the construction of Germanic villages and cities.***

We find the same cosmological scheme and ritual representation in a wide variety of cultures: settlement is identified with the creation of the world.

City cosmos

Our world is a cosmos, so any external attack threatens to turn it into chaos. "Our world" imitates the exemplary work of the gods, the cosmogony. Therefore, the enemies who attack it become identified with the adversaries of the gods, above all with the world demon, the primeval dragon, which was defeated by the gods at the beginning of time. An attack on "our world" represents the revenge of the mystical dragon, who rises up against the work of the gods, the cosmos, and wants to reduce it to nothingness. Enemies belong to the forces of chaos. Every destruction of a city is a relapse into chaos. Every victory repeats the exemplary victory of the gods over the attacker, the dragon (i.e. chaos).

Therefore, the pharaoh was identified with the god Ra, the slayer of the dragon Apophis, while his enemies embodied this mythical dragon. Darius considered himself the new Thraetaona. (Thraetaona, an Iranian legendary hero, killed a three-headed dragon.) In Jewish tradition, pagan kings were depicted with dragon-like features: for example, Nebuchadnezzar in Jeremiah's description (51:34) and Pompey in the Hymns of Solomon (IX, 29).

As we shall see, the dragon is the image of the sea monster, the primeval serpent, the symbol of cosmic water, darkness, night and death – in short, the formless and the virtual, everything that does not yet have a "form". In order for the cosmos to come into being, some god had to defeat and cut up the dragon. Marduk[xvi] created Tîamât, the world, from the body of the sea monster. Yahweh created the world after defeating the primordial monster, Rahab.

the universe. However, God's victory over the dragon must be symbolically repeated every year, because the world must be recreated annually. In the same way, every city's victory over its attackers repeats God's victory over the powers of death, darkness and chaos.

The defensive structures of settlements and cities most likely served magical purposes. These structures – moats, labyrinths, walls – are more suitable for warding off demons and the souls of the dead than for defending against human attackers. In northern India, during plague epidemics, a circle is drawn around the village to keep away the demons of disease.* In medieval Western Europe, city walls were ritually consecrated to provide protection against demons, disease and death. For symbolic thinking, it is perfectly natural to identify human enemies with demons and death. Whether it is a demonic or military attack, the result is ultimately the same: decline, destruction, death.

Even today, these same images are used to symbolise the dangers threatening a particular culture. They speak of "chaos", "destruction" and "darkness" in which "our world" will perish. All these phrases signify the destruction of some kind of order, cosmos, organic culture, a return to some kind of fluid, formless, chaotic state. In this way, exemplary images live on even in the language of non-religious people. The behaviour of profane people also preserves something of the religious worldview, although they are probably not always aware of this heritage.

Taking on the creation of the world

Let us now examine the fundamental difference between the two types of behaviour – traditional (religious) and profane – in relation to human dwellings. The importance and function of dwellings in industrial society is well known. According to Le Corbusier[xviii], one of the famous architects of our time, a house is a "living machine", i.e. one of the countless machines mass-produced by industrial society. Above all, the ideal modern house must be "practical", i.e. it must provide work and the peace and quiet necessary for work. The "living machine" can be replaced just as often as a bicycle, a refrigerator or a car. We can also replace our hometown or our homeland with another place of residence, and in doing so, we do not necessarily have to deal with any inconveniences other than climate change.

It is not our task to write the history of the slow desacralisation of human dwellings. This process is part of the enormous transformation that has taken place in the world as a result of industrial society, preceded by the desacralisation of the cosmos in the wake of scientific thinking, especially the marvellous discoveries in physics and chemistry. Later, we will ask whether this secularisation of nature is truly irreversible, and whether non-religious people no longer have the opportunity to rediscover the sacred dimension of existence. We have seen, and will see even more clearly in the following, that certain traditional images, traces of ancient behaviour, survive as "remnants" even in the most industrialised societies. For the moment, however, we only want to show and elaborate on religious behaviour related to housing in its original form, as well as the worldview that comes to light in this behaviour.

Settling in an area and building a home is always a vital decision for an individual, as it is for a community. In such cases, it is necessary to create the world in which they want to live, that is, to repeat the gods

cosmogony. However, this is not always easy, because there are also tragic, bloody cosmogonies, and the person whose task it is to imitate the divine act must also repeat these. The gods had to kill and cut up the sea monster, the primordial creature, in order to create the world from it - so man must do the same when he creates his world, his city or his house. This explains the bloody or symbolic "building sacrifices" that occur during construction, which take countless forms and which we will discuss later.

Whatever the structure of a traditional society may be – hunters and herders, farmers or city dwellers – the home is always sacred because it is a reflection of the world, and the world is a divine creation. However, dwellings can be made cosmic in different ways, as there are different types of cosmogonies. For our purposes, it is sufficient to distinguish between two types of ritual transformation of dwellings (both the country and the house) into cosmic spaces: a) the dwelling becomes similar to the cosmos by projecting the four horizons from a central point. This happens when a village is founded, or when a symbolic axis mundi is erected (when a family home is built). b) Through a building ceremony, the exemplary divine act is repeated, in which the world is created from the body of a sea dragon or primordial giant. We do not wish to show here the fundamental difference between the two worldviews expressed in these two types of dwelling consecration, nor do we wish to examine their cultural-historical preconditions in detail. We will only mention that while knowledge of the first type – the "cosmisation" of a space through the projection of horizons or the establishment of an axis mundi – has survived at the most ancient cultural level (cf. the Australian Achilpa's kauwa-auwa pole), the second type seems to have emerged in the wake of ancient plant-growing cultures. We are primarily interested in the fact that in all traditional cultures, the dwelling also has a sacred aspect, insofar as it reflects the world.

For example, in the dwellings of primitive peoples in the Arctic, North America and North Asia, we find a central pillar, which is identified with the axis mundi, or the world pillar or world tree connecting the earth and the sky. In other words, the construction of their dwellings emphasises cosmic symbolism. The house is imago mundi. The sky is imagined as a huge tent supported by a central pillar; the tent pole or the central pillar of the house is identified with the world pillars and is also called that. This central pole plays an important role in rituals: sacrifices are made at its foot to the highest celestial being. The same symbolism has survived among the shepherds and herders of Central Asia, only here the yurt replaces the dwelling with a conical roof and central pillar, and the mythical ritual function of the pillar is taken over by the upper opening, the smoke hole. Like the pile (i.e. the axis mundi), the forked tree, whose top protrudes from the upper opening of the yurt (and which is a symbol of the cosmic tree), is regarded as a celestial ladder; travelling to the heavens, the shamans climb it and fly up through the upper opening.* The sacred pillar in the centre of the house can also be found in Africa, among the Hamitic and Hamitoid[xviii] pastoral peoples.**

Every dwelling place is therefore located along the axis mundi, because religious people can only live in the centre, that is, in absolute reality.

Cosmogony and building sacrifice

We encounter a similar idea in a highly developed culture such as India, only here another type of identification between the house and the cosmos manifests itself.

Before the masons lay the first stone, the astronomer marks the point where the foundation stone is to be placed; this point is located on the serpent that carries the world. The master mason sharpens a stake and drives it into the ground at the marked point so that it firmly secures the serpent's head. Then a foundation stone is placed on the stake. The cornerstone is thus located precisely at the "centre of the world".* Otherwise, the laying of the foundation stone repeats the act of cosmogony, for when the stake is driven into the serpent's head to "secure" it, they imitate the ancient deed of Soma or Indra, who, as the Rigveda says, "killed the serpent in its hiding place" (IV, 17, 9), and whose lightning "cut off the serpent's head" (I, 52, 10). As already mentioned, the serpent is a symbol of chaos, formlessness, and non-manifestation. Its killing is identified with the act of creation, the transition from the virtual and formless to the formed. Let us remember that Marduk created the world from the body of the prehistoric sea monster, Tiamat. This victory was symbolically repeated every year, renewing the cosmos annually. However, this exemplary divine victory was also repeated in all kinds of construction, because with every new construction, the creation of the world was reproduced.

This second type of cosmogony is much more complex, and so we can only describe it in outline. Nevertheless, we had to introduce it, because countless forms of "building sacrifice" are connected with this type. The building sacrifice is basically nothing more than a symbolic imitation of the ancient sacrifice that gave rise to the world. The myths of one type of culture explain the creation of the world as the killing of a giant (Ymir in Germanic mythology, Purusha in Indian mythology, P'an-ku in China); the various cosmic regions are created from his organs. In other myths, not only the cosmos itself is created as a result of the sacrifice of some primordial being and from its material, but also cultivated plants, human species and different social classes. The building sacrifice originates from this type of cosmogonic myth. It is well known that in order for a building (house, temple, technical structure, etc.) to survive, it must be alive, that is, it must contain life and soul. However, the "transfer" of the soul can only be achieved through bloody sacrifice. The history of religion, ethnology and folklore recognise countless forms of bloody and symbolic building sacrifices.* In South-Eastern Europe, the most beautiful folk ballads were created as a result of such rituals and beliefs; among other things, they show how the master builder's wife is sacrificed in order to complete the construction (cf. the ballad of the Arta Bridge in Greece, the ballad of the Arges Monastery in Romania, etc.)[xix]

From everything we have said so far about the religious significance of human habitation, further conclusions arise almost naturally. Just as the city and the sanctuary are consecrated, so too is the house – or part of the house – consecrated with a cosmological ritual. Therefore, every settlement, village foundation and house construction is a difficult decision on which a person's entire existence depends. People must create their "own" world and take responsibility for its maintenance and renewal. They do not change their place of residence lightly, because it is not easy to give up their "world". A home is not an object. It is not a "dwelling machine", but the universe itself, which man builds for himself when he imitates the exemplary creation of the gods, the cosmogony. The consecration and construction of every new place of residence is, to a certain extent, identified with a new beginning, a new life. And every beginning repeats the ancient beginning, when the universe came into being. Even in modern, strongly desacralised societies, we move into our new homes in a ceremonial setting, and something of the former ceremonial exuberance of the incipit vita nova is preserved in this.

Since the place of residence is *imago mundi*, it is symbolically placed at the "centre of the world". The large number, indeed the infinite number, of centres of the world does not pose a problem for religious thinking, because we are not talking about geometric space, but existential and sacred space, which has a completely different structure and allows for an infinite number of breakthroughs and transcendent connections. We have already discussed the cosmological significance and ritual role of the upper opening of different types of dwellings. In other cultures, this cosmological significance and function applies to the hearth (i.e. the smoke hole) and the part of the roof above the "sacred corner". If one of the inhabitants of the house has been struggling with death for a long time, this part of the roof is removed and sometimes even destroyed. When we talk about the identification of the cosmos, the house and the body, we point out the profound significance of this "roof break". For now, let us be content with the fact that the most ancient shrines were open at the top, or had an opening in the roof, the so-called "cupola", which symbolised the breaking through of planes and connection with the transcendent.

Sacred architecture thus only adopted and further developed the cosmological symbolism that was already present in the structure of primitive dwellings. The precursor to human dwellings, however, was the temporary "sacred place", which is identical to the temporarily consecrated and cosmic space (see the Australian *achilpas*). This means that all symbols and rituals associated with temples, cities and houses can ultimately be traced back to the primordial experience of sacred space.

Temple, basilica, cathedral

In the great Eastern civilisations, from Mesopotamia and Egypt to India, the temple underwent a significant re-evaluation: it was no longer merely an *imago mundi*, but also an earthly imitation of a heavenly model. Judaism also adopted the ancient Eastern idea that the temple was a reflection of a heavenly archetype. This is probably one of the ultimate interpretations that religious people gave to the aforementioned primal experiences – the experience of the contrast between sacred and profane space. Therefore, we must pause for a moment to consider the implications of this new religious idea.

Let us summarise once again: the temple is *imago mundi* because the world is the work of the gods and therefore sacred. The temple is a cosmological sacred place, the house of the gods, and it sanctifies the world again and again because it simultaneously represents and encompasses it. The temple sanctifies the whole world. No matter how impure the world may be, the sanctity of the shrines purifies it again and again.

From this ontological difference between the cosmos and its sacred mirror image, the temple, another point of view arises. The sanctity of the temple is not affected by worldly decay, because its design is the work of the gods and therefore belongs to the gods, that is, to heaven. The heavenly model of temples has a spiritual, inviolable, celestial existence. By the grace of the gods, this model appears to humans in visionary form, and humans strive to realise it on earth. The goddess Nibada appeared to Gudea, king of Babylon, in a dream, showing him a tablet on which the favourable constellations were recorded, and a god also appeared who revealed to him the plan of the temple: Sennacherib[xxi] built Nineveh according to a plan "that had been written in the stars since time immemorial".* This not only means that "celestial geometry" made the first buildings possible, but above all that the buildings followed celestial patterns and therefore also shared in celestial sanctity.

At the beginning of time, Yahweh created the tabernacle, the sacred objects and the patterns for the temple for the people of Israel; he revealed the patterns to his chosen ones so that they could imitate them on earth. He said to Moses: "And let them make me a holy dwelling place, that I may dwell among them. Make everything according to the pattern I have shown you, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings." (Exodus 25:8-9) "See that you make them according to the pattern shown to you on the mountain." (Ibid. 40.) When David handed over to his son Solomon the plans for the construction of the temple, the patterns for the tabernacle and all its furnishings, he said: "All these things have been written by the hand of the Lord." (1 Chronicles 28:19) Thus, the heavenly model that Yahweh had created at the beginning of time floated before his eyes. This is precisely what Solomon makes known:

*You said that I should build a temple
on your holy mountain,
And an altar in your city, a replica of
the holy tent, which you made from
the beginning*

(Book of Wisdom 9:8)

God created the heavenly Jerusalem at the same time as paradise, that is, in aeternum. The city of Jerusalem was only an imperfect imitation of the heavenly model. The city itself could be destroyed by men, but its model remained inviolable because it was outside of time. "This city is not the one I have revealed, which has been ready here since the time I decided to create Eden, and which I showed to Adam before his fall." (Apocalypse of Baruch II, 4, 3-7.)

The Christian basilica and later the cathedral revive and further develop all these symbol systems. On the one hand, the church must be the counterpart of the heavenly Jerusalem - this idea has been prevalent since the time of the Church Fathers.

On the other hand, it also reproduces Eden or the heavenly world. However, in Christian consciousness, the cosmological structure of the sacred building also lives on.

This is clearly evident in Byzantine churches, for example: "The four parts of the church interior represent the four corners of the world. The interior of the church is the universe. The altar is paradise, located in the east. The imperial door of the altar is also called the gate of paradise. During Easter week, the main door of the altar remains open throughout the entire service; the meaning of this custom is clearly expressed in the Easter canon: 'Christ rose from his tomb and opened the gates of paradise before us. In contrast, the western part is the realm of darkness, terror and death, the eternal abode of the dead who await the resurrection at the Last Judgement. The centre of the church building is the earth. According to the idea of Kosmas Indikopleustes[xxii], the Earth has four corners, bordered by four walls, on which a cone rises. The four interior parts of the church symbolise the four corners of the world.'"* The Byzantine church is a replica of the cosmos, embodying and sanctifying the world.

Final conclusions

We have selected only a few examples from the thousands available to religious historians, but even these reveal that religious people experience space in different ways. We have taken these examples from different cultures and periods in order to present at least the most important mythological and ritual expressions of religious experience of space. Throughout history, religious people have evaluated this fundamental experience in very different ways. This becomes immediately clear when we compare the Achilpa concept of sacred space in Australia with that of the Kwakiutl, the Altai, or the

We compare this with the corresponding ideas of the Mesopotamians. It goes without saying that the religious life of humanity is realised in history, and its forms of expression are therefore determined by many historical moments and cultural styles. However, we are not so much interested in the infinite diversity of religious experiences as in what these experiences have in common. If we compare the relationship of a non-religious person to the space in which they live with that of a religious person to sacred space, we immediately recognise the huge difference between these two behaviours.

Let us summarise what we have discussed so far. The experience of sacred space makes it possible to "found the world". Where sacredness manifests itself in space, reality unfolds and the world comes into being. The intrusion of the sacred not only projects a solid point into the formless indeterminacy of profane space, not only creates a "centre" in the "chaos", but also breaks through the levels, thereby creating a connection between the cosmic planes (earth and sky), enabling the ontological transition from one mode of existence to another. This breaking of the homogeneity of profane space creates the "centre" from which man can enter into contact with the world beyond. This is the foundation of the "world", because only the centre makes orientation possible. The spatial manifestation of sacredness therefore has cosmological significance: every spatial hierophany and every consecration of space is identified with cosmogony. This leads to the first conclusion: the world can be understood as a "world" or "cosmos" insofar as it manifests itself as a sacred world.

Every world is the work of the gods, because either they created it directly, or people ritually re-enacted it, sanctified it, and thus made the exemplary act of creation "cosmic." Religious people can only live in a sanctified world, because only such a world has a part in existence, and thus only this truly exists. Religious people thirst for creation. The fear of the "chaos" surrounding their inhabited world and the terror of nothingness are closely related. The unknown outside their "world", the space that has not been made cosmic because it has not been sanctified, which is merely a formless expanse without orientation or structure, this profane space embodies absolute non-existence for religious people. If they stray there through clumsiness, they feel deprived of their ontic substance, as if they were dissolving into chaos – and ultimately doomed to destruction.

This ontological thirst, which manifests itself in many ways, is particularly evident in the religious person's endeavour to settle at the core of reality, at the centre of the world, that is, where the cosmos originated and from where it began to expand towards the four corners of the earth, where one can connect with the gods and be closest to them. As we have seen, the symbolism of the centre of the world has left its mark not only on countries, cities, temples and palaces, but also on the most humble human dwellings, the tents of nomadic hunters, the yurts of shepherds and the houses of settled farmers. In other words, every religious person settles at the centre of the world and at the same time next to the source of the absolute religion, very close to the "opening" that ensures their connection with the gods.

However, since settling down somewhere, occupying space, is identified with repeating cosmogony and thus imitating the work of the gods, for the religious person, every existential decision that fixes him spatially is also a religious decision. As soon as they take on the responsibility of "creating" the world in which they wish to live, they not only "cosmify" chaos, but also sanctify their own little cosmos, likening it to the world of the gods.

. Religious people feel a deep longing for the "divine world"; they long for a home that resembles the "home of the gods", as later temples and shrines did. This religious longing expresses the desire for the cosmos in which he lives to be as pure and sacred as it was in the beginning, when it came from the hand of the creator.

The experience of sacred time enables religious people to rediscover, from time to time, the cosmos as it was in the beginning, at the mythical moment of creation.

II. Sacred time and myths

Profane time and sacred time

In the eyes of religious people, time, like space, is neither homogeneous nor constant. On the one hand, there are sacred time intervals, the time of holidays (which are mostly seasonal holidays), and on the other hand, there is profane time, the usual time period in which events without religious significance take place. Of course, there is no continuity between these two types of time, but religious people can use rituals to transition from ordinary time to sacred time.

One essential difference between these two types of time immediately becomes apparent. Sacred time is, by its very nature, reversible; it is, in fact, a mythical ancient time that is made present again. Every religious holiday, every liturgical season means that a sacred event that took place in some mythical past, in "primordial" time, is made present again. Religious participation in the holiday means that we step into the mythical time that is made present again in this holiday. Sacred time can therefore be repeated infinitely often. One could say that it does not "flow", but is rather an irreversible "duration". It is ontological, "par menidészi" time, which always remains the same, does not change, and does not pass. With every holiday, we return to the same sacred time that manifested itself during the holiday a year ago or a century ago. This time, created and sanctified by the gods, came into being when the gods performed the very gestures that become present again during the holiday in question. In other words, in the feast we return to the first manifestation of sacred time, as it was fulfilled *ab origine*, *in illo tempore*. For the sacred time in which this feast takes place did not exist before the divine gestures honoured in the feast. When the gods created the realities that make up our world, they also established sacred time, because the time in which creation took place was sanctified by the presence and activity of the gods.

Religious people therefore live in two kinds of time, and the more important of these, sacred time, paradoxically appears to be circular, reversible, and reclaimable, a kind of mythical, eternal present in which people can participate again and again through rituals. Religious people differ from non-religious people in their attitude towards time; they are unwilling to live entirely in the "historical present", to use modern terminology; they strive to be part of a sacred time that can, in a sense, be identified with "eternity".

It would be difficult to summarise in a few sentences what time means to non-religious people in modern societies. We do not wish to deal here with either the theories of time in modern philosophy or the concepts of time in contemporary science. No

systems or philosophies, but rather existential behaviours. Even non-religious people recognise a certain discontinuity and heterogeneity in time. For them, too, there is, for example, the monotonous time of work, as opposed to the time of entertainment and enjoyment, or "holiday time". They also live in different rhythms of time and experience different intensities of time: listening to their favourite music, waiting for and seeing their loved ones, they perceive a different rhythm of time than when they are working or bored.

However, there is a significant difference between him and the religious person. The latter knows "sacred" periods of time that have nothing to do with the usual temporal processes, with a different structure and "origin"; he knows a primordial time that was consecrated by the gods and which becomes present again through the holidays. This superhuman quality of liturgical time is alien to the non-religious person. For them, therefore, there is no break in time, and time has no "secret". Time is the deepest dimension of human existence; it is bound to human existence, so it has a beginning and an end in death, which destroys existence. No matter how different the rhythms they experience may be, no matter how different their intensity may feel, non-religious people know that these are always human experiences to which no divine presence can be connected.

For religious people, on the other hand, the intervention of sacred, non-historical time can periodically "suspend" profane time. This sacred time can be called non-historical to the extent that it does not belong to the historical present. Just as the church marks a different level in the profane space of the modern city, so too does worship within the walls of the church represent a break in profane time. Here, it is no longer the current historical time that is present.

- that is, not the time that exists for people living in neighbouring streets - but the time of Christ's historical existence, the time sanctified by his revelation, suffering, death and resurrection. However, this single example is not sufficient to illustrate the whole difference between profane and sacred time. For Christianity, emphasising the historicity of Christ's person, has transformed the concept of liturgical time compared to other religions. Christian liturgy is historical, taking place in time, consecrated by the incarnation of the Son of God. The sacred time of pre-Christian (especially ancient) religions, which reappears periodically, is mythical, that is, primordial, a time that cannot be found in the historical past. It is primordial in the sense that it came into being in one fell swoop, without being preceded by anything else, since time could not have existed before the appearance of the reality described in the myth. We are primarily interested in this ancient conception of mythical time. Later, we will see how it differs from the Jewish and Christian concepts.

Church - tempus

At the outset of our investigation, we would like to list a few facts that may shed light on the relationship between religious people and time. Let us begin with a rather important observation: in the various languages of the indigenous peoples of North America, the word "world" (cosmos) is also used to mean "year". The Yookot[xxiii] say "the world has passed" when they want to express that "a year has passed". The Yuki[xxiv] express "year" with the words "earth" or "world". Like the Yookot, they also say "the earth has passed" when the year has passed. The vocabulary reveals a close connection between the world and cosmic time. They imagine the cosmos as a living entity that is created, develops, and passes away on the last day of the year, only to be reborn at New Year. We will see that this rebirth is in fact a birth, and that the cosmos is reborn every year because time begins anew with each passing year.

The connection between the cosmos and time has religious origins. The cosmos may have a similar nature to cosmic time (the "year") because both are divine realities, divine creations. Among some North American tribes, the connection between the cosmos and time is even expressed in the structure of sacred buildings. Since the temple is an image of the world, it also contains temporal symbolism. For example, as we have seen, the sacred huts of the Algonquins[xxv] and Sioux[xxvi] represent the universe, but at the same time symbolise the year: they imagine the year as a process moving in four celestial directions, represented by the four windows and four doors of the sacred lodge. The Dakota[xxvii] say: "the year circles around the world", that is, around their sacred lodge, which is *imago mundi*.*

In India, we encounter an even clearer example. We have already seen that the raising of the altar is a repetition of cosmogony. The texts add that the "fire altar is the year" and explain its symbolism of time as follows: the three hundred and sixty hedge bricks correspond to the three hundred and sixty nights of the year, and the three hundred and sixty *yajushmati* bricks correspond to the three hundred and sixty days (*Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* X, 5, 4, 10, etc.). Thus, with the construction of each altar, not only is the world recreated, but "the year is also created"; in other words, time is healed by being recreated. On the other hand, the year is identified with *Prajapati*, the cosmic god; thus, with each new altar, *Prajapati* is brought back to life, thereby confirming the sanctity of the world. By erecting the fire altar, the world must be sanctified and given its share of sacred time.

Similar temporal symbolism permeates the cosmological symbolism of the Jerusalem Temple. According to Josephus Flavius (*Ant. Jud.* III, 7, 7), the twelve loaves of bread on the table represented the twelve months of the year, and the seventy-branched candlestick represented the decanate, i.e. the division of the seven planets into ten signs of the zodiac. The temple was *imago mundi*; standing at the centre of the world, in Jerusalem, it consecrated not only the entire cosmos, but also cosmic "life", i.e. time. Hermann Usener deserves credit for proving the etymological relationship between temple and *tempus*: both words can be explained from the concept of "intersection, crossroads".* Later studies further refined this discovery: "The temple represents the spatial expression, *tempus* the temporal expression in a space-time field of vision."**

All of this presumably has the following significance: for religious people in ancient cultures, the world is renewed every year, regaining its original sanctity in each new year, that is, becoming as it was when it first came into being. This symbolism is clearly expressed in the structure of shrines. Since the temple represents both the actual sacred place and the image of the world, it sanctifies the entire cosmos and, at the same time, cosmic life. This cosmic life was imagined as a circular path and identified with the year. The year was seen as a closed circle, with a beginning and an end, but it also had the peculiarity of being able to be reborn as a new year. With each new year, a "new", "pure" and "sacred" - not yet "used up" - time came into being.

Time was reborn; it began anew because with each new year, the world was recreated. In the previous chapter, we saw the great significance of the cosmogonic myth, the model for all kinds of creation and construction. To this we can now add the following: cosmogony also includes the creation of time. Moreover, just as cosmogony is the archetype of all "creation", so cosmic time, which originates from cosmogony, is the model for all other time. To put it even more clearly: for the religious people of ancient cultures, all creation, all existence, begins in time: before a thing exists, its own time cannot exist. Before the creation of the cosmos, there was no cosmic time. Before this or that plant species was created, it could not have existed.

nor the time that now allows it to grow, mature and perish. This is why all creations are imagined at the beginning of time, in principio. Time comes into being with the first appearance of a new category of existence. This is why myth plays such an important role; it reveals how a reality comes into being.

The annual repetition of cosmogony

The cosmogonic myth recounts the creation of the cosmos. In Babylon, during the akîtu ritual[xxviii] (on the last day of the old year and the first days of the new year), the "poem of creation", the Enûma elish, was recited solemnly. The ritual recitation depicted the primordial battle between Marduk and the sea monster Tîāmat and the victory of the god, who put an end to chaos. Marduk formed the cosmos from the dismembered body of Tîāmat and created man from the blood of Kingu, Tîāmat's chief ally. That this celebration commemorating creation was indeed a re-enactment of the cosmogonic act is evident from the rituals and formulas used during the ceremony.

The battle between Tîāmat and Marduk was depicted as a battle between two groups of players. This ritual can be found among the Hittites[xxix] – also within the framework of New Year's theatre – as well as among the Egyptians and in Rassamra. The battle between the two groups of players repeated the transition from chaos to cosmos, representing cosmogony. The mythical event became present once again. "May he continue to triumph over Tîāmat and shorten his days!" cried the priest. The battle, the victory and the creation took place at that moment, there and then.

As a re-enactment of cosmogony, the new, the repetition of time from the beginning, represents the restoration of ancient, "pure" time, as it was at the moment of creation. This is why "purification" rituals are performed at New Year, to ward off demons or scapegoats. This is not just a matter of a certain period of time passing and a new period beginning (as modern man imagines it, for example), but also of the destruction of the past year, of the past time. The meaning of ritual purification is therefore the burning and erasure of the sins and mistakes of the individual and the entire community - it is not merely a matter of "purification".

The Persian New Year, Naurôz, celebrates the memory of the day on which the world and humankind were created. On Naurôz Day, the "renewal of creation" takes place, as the Arab historian Albiruni[xxx] puts it. The king exclaims: "This is a new day in a new month of a new year! What time has worn away must be renewed." Time has worn away humanity (human existence), society, and the cosmos. This destructive time is profane time, the actual duration of time; it must be abolished in order to restore the mythical moment in which the world was created amid the waves of a "pure", "strong" and "sacred" time. Rituals were used to destroy the past profane time, which represented a kind of "end of the world". The dying fire, the return of departed souls, the mixing of social classes (similar to the Saturnalia), erotic freedom, orgies – all this symbolised the return of the cosmos to chaos. On the last day of the year, the universe dissolved into the primordial waters. Tîāmat, the sea monster, symbol of darkness, formlessness and the unmanifest, was reborn and became dangerous. The world that had existed for a whole year had truly disappeared. With Tîāmat present once more, the cosmos was destroyed, and Marduk had to create it again after defeating Tîāmat once more.*

This periodic return of the world to a chaotic state of existence has the following significance: every "bóné" of the year, everything that time has sullied and worn out, has been destroyed in the physical sense of the word. Since man symbolically participated in the destruction and re-creation of the world, he too was re-created, reborn, and his new existence began. With each new year, he felt freer and purer because he was freed from the burden of his mistakes. Once again, they felt themselves to be in a fairy-tale time of creation, a sacred and "powerful" time: this time was sacred because it was transformed by the presence of the gods, and it was "powerful" because it was a special time for the most powerful creature, the universe. Man symbolically became a contemporary of cosmogony and participated in the creation of the world. In fact, in the ancient Near East, he even took an active part in this creation. (See the two hostile groups that personify the god and the sea monster.)

It is easy to understand why the memory of this wonderful time captivated religious people and why they tried to return to it from time to time: the greatest power of the gods manifested itself in illo tempore. Cosmogony, the manifestation of the highest divine order, is the most powerful expression of power, wealth and creative ability. Religious people thirst for reality. They strive with every means at their disposal to secure a place for themselves at the source of primordial reality, that is, to return to the time when the world was in its formative state.

Renewal through a return to the primordial time

All this would require multifaceted explanations, but at this moment we would like to draw your attention to two points in particular: 1. With the annual repetition of cosmogony, time was renewed, that is, it began again as sacred time, because it coincided with the illud tempus of the beginning of the world. 2. When man ritually became part of the "end" and "recreation" of the world, he became a contemporary of illud tempus; he was reborn and began his existence with the same inexhaustible reserves of vitality as at the moment of his birth.

These are important facts; they reveal to us the secret of religious behaviour in relation to time. The sacred and powerful time is the time of origin, the marvellous moment in which some reality was created and manifested itself fully for the first time; therefore, man strives to enter this primordial time again and again. The basis of every sacred calendar is the ritual re-enactment of the time when some reality first manifested itself. The festival does not commemorate a mythical (and therefore religious) event, but re-enacts the event.

The distinguished time of origin is the time of cosmogony, the moment when the greatest of all realities, the world, came into being. Therefore, as we saw in the previous chapter, cosmogony is an exemplary model for all kinds of "creation" and "making". For the same reason, the time of cosmogony is also the model for all sacred times, because the time in which the gods manifested themselves and created something is sacred; the most perfect divine manifestation and the most powerful creation, on the other hand, is the creation of the world.

Religious people do not only manifest cosmogony when they "create" something (their "world" - the inhabited area - a city, a house), but also when he has to ensure the successful reign of a new ruler, when he has to save the endangered harvest, when he has to wage war, when he has to undertake a sea voyage, etc. The recitation of the myth of the creation of the world plays a particularly important role in rituals healings because in this case the

strive to renew human existence. In the Fiji Islands, the coronation ceremony of the ruler is called "the creation of the world"; the same ceremony is repeated to save crops that are in danger. Perhaps nowhere else is the myth of the creation of the world applied as ritually and in as many ways as in Polynesia. The words spoken by the god Io in illo tempore to create the world have become ritual formulas, repeated by people on countless occasions: when they want to make a barren mother fertile, when they want to heal diseases of the body and soul, when they are preparing for war, but also in the event of death, or when they want to stimulate poetic inspiration.*

For Polynesians, therefore, the cosmogonic myth is the ancient model for all kinds of "creation", regardless of whether it takes place on a biological, psychological or spiritual level. However, since the ritual recitation of the cosmogonic myth is equivalent to the re-enactment of the aforementioned primordial event, it follows that the person for whom it is recited is magically projected "into that time", "into the beginning of the world". They thus return to the time of origin, and the therapeutic purpose of the return is to restart existence: symbolic rebirth. This healing ritual is probably based on the following idea: life cannot be "repaired". It must be recreated through the symbolic repetition of cosmogony, because cosmogony is the model for all kinds of creation.

To better understand the regenerative function of this return to the time of origin, we will take a closer look at one of the ancient healing practices. Let us take the example of Na-khik therapy, practised by the Tibetan and Burmese peoples living in south-eastern China (Yunnan Province). During the healing ritual, they solemnly recite the myth of the creation of the world and other myths about the origin of diseases in the wrath of snakes, as well as the appearance of the first shamans who brought the necessary medicines to the people. Almost all rituals evoke the beginning, the mythical time when the world did not yet exist: "In the beginning, at the time when the sky, the sun, the moon, the stars, the planets and the earth did not yet exist, when nothing had yet been created," etc. This is followed by cosmogony, then the appearance of snakes: "At the time when the sky, the sun, the moon, etc. came into being, when the earth expanded, when mountains, valleys, trees and rocks were created. . . then the nagas and dragons came into being," etc. Next, they recount the birth of the healer and the appearance of medicines. In the meantime, they say: "The origin of healing tools must be recounted, because otherwise it would be impossible to talk about them."*

It is important to note that in these magical healing songs, the myth surrounding the origin of healing tools is always interwoven with the cosmogonic myth. It is well known that among indigenous peoples, a remedy can only be effective if its origin is ritually recalled in front of the sick person. A large number of Near Eastern and European magic spells feature the story of the disease or the demon that causes it. In this way, they evoke the mythical time when a deity or saint managed to bring the evil to its knees. The origin myth, however, is probably a reflection of the cosmogonic myth, because the latter is also a model for all kinds of "origins". Therefore, even in therapeutic incantations, the cosmogonic myth sometimes precedes the origin myth, or even merges with it. For example, an Assyrian incantation against toothache reminds us that "after the god Anu created the heavens, the heavens created the earth, the earth created the rivers, the rivers created the canals, the canals created the lakes, and the lakes created the worms". The worm "bursts into tears" and turns to the gods Samas and Ea, asking them to give him something to eat, to "destroy". The gods offer him fruit, but the worm wants human teeth from them. "Since you have spoken thus, O worm, may Ea crush you with his mighty hand!"* Here, then, we see first the creation of the world, and second, the worm and the

the birth of disease, and thirdly, exemplary ancient healing (Ea destroys the worm). The healing effect of incantation lies in the fact that, performed ritually, it represents the mythical time of the "origin", the origin of the world, toothache and the cure for toothache.

The structure of the festival and the holidays

The origin of reality, that is, the time established by the first manifestation of reality, has exemplary validity and function; therefore, man strives to re-enact it from time to time with the help of appropriate rituals. However, since this "first manifestation" of reality coincides with the creation of this reality by divine or semi-divine beings, in order to rediscover the time of origin, the act of the gods must be repeated. The periodic re-enactment of the creative acts performed by the gods in *illo tempore* constitutes the sacred calendar, the totality of holidays. The holiday always takes place at the time of origin, and it is precisely this rediscovery of the time of origin that causes people to behave differently during the holidays than before or after them. For even if he often performs the same actions during the holiday as he does during non-holiday periods, the religious man believes that he is living in a different time and has indeed rediscovered "that mythical time."

During their annual totem ceremony, the *intichiuma*, the Arunta tribe of Australia follows the path laid out by their clan's divine ancestor in mythical times (*altcheringa*, literally "dreamtime"). They linger at all the places where their ancestor lingered and repeat his "temporal" deeds. Throughout the ceremony, they fast, do not carry weapons, and refrain from touching their wives or members of other clans. They immerse themselves completely in the "dreamtime".*

The annual celebrations held on the Polynesian island of Tikopia commemorate the "works of the gods", i.e. the divine acts that created the world as we know it today in mythical times. During the festive period, in which the rituals take place, certain prohibitions (taboos) are introduced. There is no noise, no games, no dancing. The ritual splitting of a piece of wood marks the transition from the profane to the sacred time. The various rituals that make up the periodic festivals, which, we emphasise once again, are nothing more than repetitions of the exemplary deeds of the gods, do not appear to differ in any way from normal activities: ritual repair of boats, ritual planting of food crops (yams, taro, etc.), establishment of shrines. In reality, however, all these ceremonial tasks are very different from the corresponding activities performed at ordinary times, because they are performed only in connection with certain objects - which are, to a certain extent, the archetypes of the corresponding class of objects - and take place in an atmosphere imbued with sacredness. The natives consciously recall, down to the smallest detail, the exemplary deeds performed by the gods in *illo tempore*.

On certain days, religious people become contemporaries of the gods, because they revive the primordial time in which the divine works were created. In primitive cultures, everything that humans do has a superhuman model; therefore, even outside of holidays, humans imitate the exemplary works of the gods and mythical ancestors in their actions. However, this journey can always be inaccurate. The model can be distorted or even forgotten. The periodic representation of divine deeds, i.e. religious peoples, reawakens people to the sanctity of the models. The ritual launching of a boat or the ritual planting of a yam bears no resemblance to the corresponding tasks performed outside of sacred times. They are "more accurate", closer to the divine model, ritualistic, that is

are religious in nature. During the ceremony, the boat is not repaired because it needs repair, but because in *illo tempore* the gods showed people how to repair a boat. This is no longer an empirical procedure, but a religious act, *imitatio dei*. The object of repair is not one of the many objects that are similar to the "boat" in their everyday function, but a mythical archetype, the boat with which the gods were concerned in *illo tempore*. Therefore, the time of the ritual repair of boats is part of primeval time, the same time in which the gods were active.

Of course, not all seasonal celebrations can be traced back to this example. However, we are not interested in the forms of the celebrations here, but rather in the structure of sacred time as it appears in the celebrations. It can be said, however, that sacred time is always the same, a "series of eternities" (Hubert and Mauss).^[xxxii] For no matter how complex the content of a religious holiday may be, it always involves a sacred event that originally took place and is now being re-enacted. The participants in the holiday become contemporaries of the mythical event. In other words, they step out of their historical time, that is, the time that surrounds the totality of profane, personal and interpersonal events, and return to the primordial time that "does not flow" because it is not part of profane time, and its essence is the infinitely accessible eternal present.

The religious person needs to immerse himself from time to time in this sacred and indestructible time. The other, ordinary time, the profane period in which all human existence takes place, is made possible for him only by sacred time. Only the eternal presence of the mythical event makes the profane period of historical events possible. For example, only the divine hierogamy that took place in *illo tempore* made sexual union between humans possible. The union of the god with the goddess takes place in a moment outside of time, in eternal presence; human unions, unless they are ritual unions, take place in profane time. Sacred, mythical time also underpins existential, historical time, because it is its model. Everything owes its existence to some divine or semi-divine being. The "origin" of reality and life itself is also religious. Jamot can be planted and used "normally" because it is also planted and used ritually from time to time. This ritual can be performed because the gods declared it in *illo tempore* when they created man and yams, and showed man how to plant and harvest these food crops.

During the holiday, the sacred dimension of life reveals itself to humans in all its richness; during the holiday, humans experience the sanctity of human existence as a divine creation. At other times, there is a danger that the main thing will be forgotten: that existence is not a "gift" of what modern people call "nature", but the creation of another, divine or semi-divine being. During the holiday, however, people rediscover the sacred dimension of existence and realise once again how the gods or mythical ancestors created humans and taught them social behaviour and practical work.

This periodic departure from "historical times" and, above all, its consequences for the entire existence of religious people may, in a certain sense, appear to be a renunciation of history and thus a rejection of creative freedom. After all, it is a question of a perpetual return to *illud tempus*, a descent into a mythical past that has nothing in common with history. From this we could conclude that the eternal repetition of the exemplary deeds originally revealed by the gods is the enemy of all human progress, and destroys all creative spontaneity. Partly

This conclusion is certainly true. But only partially, because religious people, even the most "primitive" ones, do not fundamentally reject progress; they accept it, but lend it a divine origin and dimension. Everything that "appears" to be social, cultural or technical progress from a modern perspective has been accepted by primitive societies throughout their long history as new divine revelations. For the moment, however, let us ignore this aspect of the problem. What is important for us is to understand the religious significance of this kind of repetition of divine deeds. The need to constantly repeat the same exemplary deeds clearly stems from the desire and aspiration of religious people to live as close as possible to their gods.

From time to time, becoming a contemporary of the gods

In the previous chapter, we showed how closely the cosmological symbolism of the city, the church and the house is linked to the idea of the "centre of the world". This symbolism of the centre is presumably based on the following religious experience: people want to settle in a space that is "open upwards", i.e. connected to the divine world.

The same desire to draw closer to the gods is evident when we analyse religious festivals and their significance. Returning to the sacred time of origin means becoming contemporaries of the gods, living in their presence, even if this presence is "mysterious" because it is not always visible. The intention revealed in the experience of sacred space and sacred time shows the desire for humans to return to a kind of starting point, that is, a time when the gods and mythical ancestors were present, created and organised the world, and revealed the foundations of culture to humans. This "primordial state" does not belong to the order of history, it is not part of chronology; it is a mythical "before", the time of "origin", that which happened "in the beginning", *in principio*. "In the beginning", however, means when the gods and demigods were active on earth. The longing for the "origins" is therefore a religious longing. Man longs for the active presence of the gods, he wants to live in a fresh, pure and "strong" world, a world that is just as it was when it came out of the hands of the creator. The periodic return to the beginning of time can largely be explained by nostalgia for the perfection of the beginning. In Christian terminology, we could say that it is "nostalgia for paradise", although at the primitive cultural level, the religious and ideological context is quite different from that of the Judeo-Christian world. Nevertheless, the mythical time that man strives to revive is a time sanctified by the divine presence; therefore, the desire to live in the presence of God and in a perfect (because newly born) world can be equated with nostalgia for the paradisiacal situation.

The religious person's desire to return to this state from time to time, their efforts to place themselves back in a kind of mythical initial situation, as already mentioned, may seem unbearable and humiliating to modern people. Such homesickness inevitably leads to the constant repetition of a limited number of actions and behaviours. In a sense, we could even say that, especially in primitive societies, the main characteristic of religious people is that eternal return has a paralysing effect on them. The modern psychologist would be tempted to conclude from such behaviour a fear of risk, a rejection of the responsibility of real, historical existence, and a longing for a state that is considered "paradisiacal" precisely because it is still unformed.

The problem is too complex to be discussed here. It also goes beyond the scope of our topic, because ultimately it raises the question of the contrast between modern and pre-modern man. However, we would like to say that it would be a mistake to believe that religious people in primitive societies reject the responsibility of true existence. On the contrary, as we have seen and will continue to see, they courageously accept serious responsibilities, such as participating in the creation of the world, creating their own world, ensuring the life of plants and animals, etc. However, this is a different kind of responsibility than what we modern people consider real and valid: it is a responsibility on a cosmic level, which is very different from the moral, social and historical responsibilities of modern cultures. Within profane existence, humans only recognise responsibility to themselves and to society. In their eyes, the universe is not a real cosmos, a living, articulated unity, but simply the totality of material resources and natural energies found on our earth, and their main concern is not to deplete these energy sources through clumsiness. Primitive man, on the other hand, always places himself in a cosmic context. His personal experience is not lacking in authenticity and depth, but he speaks in a language that is unfamiliar to us, and therefore appears unreal and childish in the eyes of modern man.

Returning to our actual topic: we have no right to interpret periodic returns to the sacred time of origin as a rejection of the real world and an escape into dreams and imagination. On the contrary, it seems that this is also a manifestation of ontological obsession, which can generally be considered one of the essential characteristics of primitive and ancient societies.

The desire to return to the time of origin also means the desire to rediscover God's presence and the desire to return to the strong, fresh and pure world that existed at the beginning of time. It is both a thirst for the sacred and a longing for existence. On an existential level, this manifests itself in the certainty that man can start life over again and again with the best possible "chances". This implies not only an optimistic view of existence, but also an unconditional affirmation of being. The religious person proclaims with his entire behaviour that he believes in nothing else but existence, and he offers the primordial revelation of which he is the guardian for participation in existence. The totality of primordial revelations, however, is contained in his myths.

Myth as an exemplary model

Mythology recounts sacred stories as primordial events that took place at the beginning of time, *ab initio*. However, recounting a sacred story is equivalent to revealing some kind of mystery, because the characters in the myth are not human beings: they are gods or culture-creating heroes, and their deeds are therefore mysteries that humans would not be able to experience if they were not revealed to them. Myth is therefore a story about what happened in *illo tempore*, an account of what they did.

the gods and heroes at the beginning of time. To "tell" a myth means to make known what originally happened. Once a myth has been "told", that is, revealed, it becomes an unassailable truth: it establishes absolute truth. "It is so because it has been told that it is so," explain the Netsilik Eskimos[xxxii] to justify the validity of their sacred stories and religious traditions. Myth reveals the emergence of some new cosmic "situation" or primordial event. Thus, it is always an account of some kind of "creation."

. It recounts how something was accomplished, how it came into being; it speaks only of reality, of what actually happened and was fully manifested.

Of course, we are talking about sacred realities, because the sacred is the true reality. What belongs to the profane sphere has no part in existence, because the profane is not ontologically grounded in any myth and has no exemplary model. Thus, for example, as we shall see, ploughing and sowing is a ritual proclaimed by the gods or culture-creating heroes and is therefore both a real and a significant act. Let us compare this with ploughing and sowing in a desacralised society, where the profane has become part of an activity justified solely by profit: the land is cultivated and ploughed in order to exploit it, to gain profit and food from it. Deprived of its religious symbolism, field work becomes "incomprehensible" and nerve-wracking. It no longer reveals any meaning, nor does it allow for "opening up" to the universal, spiritual world. The gods and culture-creating heroes never performed profane acts. Everything that the gods and ancestors did, everything that the myths tell us about their creative activities, belongs to the sacred sphere and is therefore part of existence. In contrast, everything that people do on their own initiative, without a mythical model, belongs to the profane sphere and is therefore vain and illusory, and ultimately unrealistic. The more religious a person is, the more they can follow models in their behaviour and actions. In other words, the more religious a person is, the more they conform to reality and the less they are in danger of engaging in unexemplary, "subjective", in short, inappropriate behaviour.

This aspect of myth is particularly important. Since myth recounts the creative activities of the gods and reveals the sanctity of their work, it expresses what is absolutely sacred. In other words, myth describes the various, sometimes dramatic ways in which sacredness enters the world. For this very reason, among many primitive peoples, myths cannot be told at any time, but only during periods particularly rich in rituals (autumn and winter) or during religious ceremonies, that is, during sacred times. The intrusion of sacredness into the world as recounted in myth is what truly grounds the world. Every myth tells how a reality came into being, be it the whole reality, the cosmos, or a part of it: an island, a plant species, a human settlement. When they recount how things came into being, they explain them and indirectly answer the other question of why they came into being. The how always includes the why, for the simple reason that by recounting how something came into being, they reveal the intrusion of the sacred into the world and thus the ultimate cause of all that truly exists.

Since all creation is divine work, the breaking of sanctity consequently also means the breaking of the creative force into the world. All creation springs from some kind of abundance. The gods create from overflowing power, from an overflow of energy. Creation stems from the excess of ontological substance. For this reason, the myth that recounts this sacred ontophania, this triumphant manifestation of the richness of being, becomes the exemplary model for all human activity. For it is only in this that the real, the overflowing and the active are manifested. "We must do what the gods did in the beginning." (Satapatha Brāhmaṇa VII, 2, 1, 4.) "Thus did the gods, and thus do men," adds Taitirīya Brāhmaṇa (I, 5, 9, 4). The main function of myth is to provide an exemplary model for every ritual and every essential human activity (nutrition, sexuality, work, education). As responsible human beings, humans imitate the exemplary deeds of the gods and repeat their actions, regardless of whether they are simple physiological functions, such as

whether it concerns nutrition or social, economic, cultural or military activities.

In New Guinea, numerous myths tell of distant sea voyages, thus "providing role models for today's seafarers". But they also contain patterns for other activities: "Love, war, fishing, rainmaking or anything else... the myth provides role models for every stage of boat building, including the associated sexual taboos." When a sailor sets out to sea, he embodies the mythical hero, Aori. "He wears the clothes that Aori wore in the myth; like Aori, he blackens his face and wears a headdress like the one Aori took from Lviris's head. He dances on the deck, spreading his arms like Aori spread his wings... A fisherman told me that when he goes fishing [with a bow], he identifies himself with Kivavia. He did not beg the mythical hero for mercy and help, but identified himself with him."*

This symbolic system of mythical processes can also be found in other primitive cultures. J. P. Harrington writes about the Karuk people of California: "Everything the Karuk did, they did because they believed that the Ikxareyavok had set an example for them in mythical times. The Ikxareyavok were the people who lived in America before the arrival of the Indians. Today's Karuk, who no longer know "princes", "chiefs", "angels" . . . They stayed with them only until they had passed on all their customs, and in every case they said to the Karuk: "This is how people do it." The magical formulas of the Karuk still recount their deeds and words today."*

This precise imitation of divine role models has a dual effect: when humans imitate the gods, they secure a place for themselves in the sacred, and thus in reality; on the other hand, by constantly re-enacting exemplary divine deeds, they sanctify the world. Human religious behaviour contributes to the preservation of the sanctity of the world.

A religious person undertakes a human existence that has a superhuman, transcendent role model. They only recognise themselves as real human beings insofar as they imitate gods, culture-creating heroes and mythical ancestors. In other words, they want to be something other than what they could otherwise be on the plane of profane existence. The religious person is not a ready-made entity: when they approach the divine model, they create themselves. As already mentioned, these models are preserved in myths, narratives about divine deeds. The religious person therefore considers himself to be just as much a product of history as the profane person, but for him, only the sacred history revealed in myths, that is, the history of the gods, is important. The secular person, on the other hand, only wants to be shaped by human history, that is, by the sum total of those deeds that do not interest the religious person because they have no divine models. The religious person places the role model they strive to emulate on a superhuman plane from the outset, the plane that is expressed in myths. Only those who identify with the teachings of myths, that is, those who imitate the gods, become true human beings.

Such imitatio dei sometimes entails a very serious responsibility for primitive people. We have already seen that certain blood sacrifices were justified by some ancient divine act: at the beginning of time, the god killed the sea monster, cut up its body, and created the cosmos from it. Humans repeat this blood sacrifice, sometimes even in the form of human sacrifice, whenever they build a village, a temple, or even a single house. The possible consequences of imitatio dei

are clearly evident in the mythology and rituals of many primitive peoples. Just one example: according to the myths of the ancient settlers, man became what he is today – that is, a mortal being condemned to sexuality and labour – as a result of an ancient murder. In the beginning of time, a divine being, woman or girl, sometimes even a child or man, often sacrificed themselves so that a root tuber or fruit tree could grow from their body. This first murder radically changed the way humans existed. The sacrifice of the divine being marked the beginning of the struggle for food, which led to the inevitability of death and, with it, sexuality as the only means of ensuring the continuation of life. The body of the sacrificed deity was transformed into food, and his soul descended to the earth, where he established the realm of the dead. Ad. E. Jensen devoted a significant book to this type of deity, which he calls a dema-deity, and he demonstrates very convincingly that while humans eat or die, they benefit from the existence of the dema.*

In the eyes of all these ancient peoples, it is of enormous importance to periodically recall the primordial event that laid the foundation for the current human order. Their religious life consists solely of remembrance and commemoration. Through rituals (i.e. the re-enactment of the primordial murder), they revive the memory of the mythical event again and again.

They must be careful not to forget what happened at the beginning of time. Forgetting is a great sin. The young girl who stays in a dark hut for three days on the occasion of her first menstruation and speaks to no one imitates the mythical situation in which the murdered girl turned into the moon and spent three days in darkness. If she breaks the taboo of silence and speaks, she commits the sin of forgetting the primordial event. Personal memory plays no role: only the memory of the mythical event matters, because only this is creative in nature and therefore worthy of remembrance. In myth, true history, the history of the human condition, is passed down. Myth thus contains the principles and examples of all kinds of behaviour.

Ritual cannibalism appears at this stage of culture. A kind of metaphysical aspiration can be observed in cannibalism: one must not forget everything that happened at the beginning of time. Volhardt and Jensen have demonstrated this very clearly: through the pigs that are killed and eaten during the festivities, through the first buds, they eat from the body of God, just as they do at cannibalistic feasts. Pig sacrifice, headhunting and cannibalism are closely symbolically related to the harvesting of tubers or coconuts. Volhardt deserves credit* for showing the religious meaning of cannibalism and, at the same time, the human responsibility of cannibals. Food crops are not a gift of nature; they are the result of murder, because murder brought them into the world at the dawn of time. Man took on manhunting, human sacrifice, cannibalism and everything else in order to protect the life of plants. Volhardt rightly pointed out on several occasions that cannibals take responsibility for the world. Cannibalism is not a "natural" behaviour characteristic of primitive man (it did not even appear at the most primitive level of culture), but a behaviour rooted in culture and based on a religious view of life. In order for the plant world to survive, humans must kill and be killed, and must embrace sexuality to its very limits, to the point of orgy. An Abyssinian song expresses this: "Those who have not yet given birth, give birth; those who have not yet killed, kill!" Both sexes are destined to fulfil their purpose.

Before condemning cannibalism, we should always remember that it is sanctioned by divine beings. They do this to enable humans to take responsibility in the cosmos and to ensure that, through their care, plant life can continue to exist.

life can continue. It is therefore a matter of religious responsibility. As the Uto cannibals[xxxiii] say: "Our traditions are always alive, even when we are not dancing. We work only so that we can dance." In their dances, they re-enact all mythical events, including the first murder, which gave rise to cannibalism.

With this example, we wanted to point out that primitive peoples and ancient Eastern cultures did not view imitatio dei as idyllic, but rather as a terrible human responsibility. Anyone who judges a society to be "savage" cannot ignore the fact that even the most barbaric acts and the most reprehensible behaviours always followed superhuman, divine patterns. What distortions and misunderstandings led to certain religious behaviours becoming empty and going astray is a completely different problem, which we do not wish to address here. What is important for us is to see clearly that religious people still intended to imitate their gods even when they committed acts that bordered on madness, shame and sin.

Sacred history, history, historicism

Let us reiterate: religious people recognise two types of time, profane and sacred time; the passing of time and the "series of eternities", the latter of which can be reached again during the holidays that make up the sacred calendar. The liturgical time of the calendar takes place in a closed circle. This is the cosmic time of the year, which is "consecrated by the works of the gods". Since the creation of the world is considered the greatest divine work, the feast of cosmogony plays an important role in many religions. The new year coincides with the first day of creation. The year is the temporal dimension of the cosmos. When a year passes, they say, "The world has passed."

At the beginning of each new year, they repeat the cosmogony; they recreate the world and thus "create" time; when they "start again", they revive it. The myth of the creation of the world is therefore the model for all "creation" and all "construction"; that is why it is also used as a ritual healing tool. When we symbolically become contemporaries of creation, we regain our original richness. The sick person becomes healthy because they draw new life from the world's unbroken supply of energy.

A religious festival is a representation of some primordial event, "sacred history", in which the actors are gods and demigods. "Sacred history" is recounted in myths. The participants in the holiday thus become contemporaries of the gods and demigods. They live in the initial time, sanctified by the presence and activity of the gods. The sacred calendar revives this time from time to time, identifying it with the time of origin, the "strong" and "pure" time. The religious experience of the festival, participation in the sacred, allows people to live again and again in the presence of the gods. This is why myths are so important in all pre-Mosaic religions; myths recount the deeds of the gods, and these deeds are models for all human activity. The religious person lives in the time of origin, in mythical time, to the extent that he imitates his gods. In other words, he "steps out" of profane time and finds himself in a "motionless" time, in "eternity".

For religious people in primitive societies, myths constitute "sacred history"; therefore, they must not be forgotten. When primitive people re-enact myths, they come closer to their gods and become part of the sacred. However, there are also "tragic divine stories", and people take on a great responsibility towards themselves and nature when they re-enact them

from time to time. Ritual cannibalism, for example, is the result of a tragic religious concept.

Let us summarise what we have discussed so far. By re-enacting myths, religious man wants to get closer to the gods and become part of existence; his desire for holiness and, at the same time, his ontological longing for home are expressed in his imitation of divine models.

In primitive and ancient religions, the eternal repetition of divine deeds proves to be *imitatio dei*. The sacred calendar contains the same holidays every year, commemorating the same mythical events. Basically, it is about the "eternal return" of a limited number of divine acts, and this is true not only in primitive religions, but in all others as well. The festive calendar everywhere consists of the periodic return of the same initial situations. For the religious person, the reappearance of the same mythical events is the greatest of all hopes, because with each manifestation, there is another opportunity to transform one's existence and make it resemble the divine model. For the religious person in primitive and ancient societies, the eternal repetition of exemplary deeds, the eternal encounter with the same mythical origins sanctified by the gods, does not lead to a pessimistic view of life; on the contrary, in their eyes, it is precisely this and the "eternal return" to the sources of reality that saves human existence from nothingness and death.

This perspective fundamentally changes as soon as the meaning of cosmic religiosity becomes obscured. This happens when, in more advanced societies, the intellectual elite increasingly distances itself from the "patterns" of traditional religion. The periodic sanctification of time becomes meaningless and superfluous. The gods can no longer be reached through cosmic rhythms. The religious significance of repeating exemplary deeds is forgotten. However, repetition that has been emptied of religious content inevitably leads to a pessimistic view of life. Cyclical time, which no longer leads back to some initial situation, to the mysterious presence of the gods, thus offers the terrifying prospect of desecralised cyclical time: it becomes a circle that returns incessantly to itself, eternally repeating itself.

This occurred in India, where the doctrine of cosmic cycles (*yuga*) underwent rich development. The entire cycle, the *mahâyuga*, lasts twelve thousand years. It "ends" in *pralaya*, which is repeated particularly radically at the end of the thousandth cycle (*mahâpralaya*, "the great ending"). The exemplary pattern: creation - destruction - creation, etc., continues indefinitely. A *mahâyuga* of twelve thousand years was considered a "divine year", each of which lasted three hundred and sixty years, and on this basis, a single cosmic cycle consisted of a total of 4,320,000 years. A thousand such *mahâyugas* make up a *kalpa* ("form"), fourteen *kalpas* a *manvantâra* (so called because it was assumed that each *manvantâra* was ruled by a *Manu*, the mythical king). One *kalpa* is one day in the life of *Brâhma*, a second is one night. One hundred such *Brâhma* "years", or 311 trillion human years, make up the life of a god. However, even this significant period of time in *Brâhma*'s life is not the end of time, because the gods are not eternal, and cosmic creations and destructions follow each other endlessly.*

This is the true "eternal return", the eternal repetition of the cosmic basic rhythm through periodic destruction and recreation. This is the ancient concept of the "cosmic year", but stripped of its religious content. The doctrine of *yuga* was developed by the spiritual elite, and when it became a pan-Indian doctrine, its terrifying nature

was not recognised by all Indian social classes. It was mainly the religious and philosophical elite who were filled with despair at the sight of the endlessly repeating cyclical time. For Indian thinking, this eternal return meant an eternal return to existence through karma, i.e. the rule of the general law of causality. On the other hand, time was homologous with cosmic illusion (maya), and the eternal return to existence meant the unlimited continuation of suffering and bondage. The only hope for these religious and philosophical elites was rebirth, the cessation of karma, in other words, final liberation (moksha), which included transcending the cosmos.*

The Greeks were also familiar with the myth of eternal return, and philosophers of later ages repeatedly expanded on the concept of cyclical time. We quote from H. Ch. Puech's excellent summary: "According to Plato's famous definition, time, which determines and measures the transformation of the celestial spheres, is the moving image of motionless eternity, which imitates eternity in its circular motion. Consequently, the entire cosmic development, just like the world of generation and decay, our world, is formed in a circular or unlimited series of cycles, in which the same reality arises, passes away and arises again according to a defined law. Not only do they contain the same amount of existence, from which nothing is lost and nothing new is added, but certain thinkers of late antiquity = Pythagoreans, Stoics, and Platonists, even assumed that within each such time cycle, or aeon, the same situations that had already occurred in previous cycles would recur and would occur again in later cycles. No event is unique or happens only once (e.g. the condemnation and death of Socrates), but has already happened and will happen again and again. Each time the circle returns to itself, the same individuals appear, have appeared and will appear. Cosmic time is repetition and anacyclosis, eternal return."*

Compared to ancient and old Eastern religions concerning eternal return and the mythical, philosophical ideas developed in India and Greece, Judaism brought something fundamentally new. For Judaism, time has a beginning and an end. They transcend the idea of cyclical time. Unlike the gods of other religions, Yahweh no longer manifests himself in cosmic time, but in irreversible historical time. None of Yahweh's new manifestations can be traced back to any previous manifestation. The destruction of Jerusalem expresses Yahweh's wrath against his people, but this was a different kind of wrath than that expressed by Yahweh in the destruction of Samaria. His actions are personal interventions in the course of history; their deeper meaning is revealed only to his people, the people he has chosen. The historical event thus takes on a new dimension: it becomes a theophany.*

Christianity goes even further in its assessment of historical time. Since God became flesh, that is, since he took on a historically defined human existence, history has become sanctifiable. The *illud tempus*, the time evoked by the Gospels, is a specific historical time: the era in which Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, but this time is sanctified by the presence of Christ. When a Christian today participates in liturgical time, he or she is transported back to "that time" when Christ lived, died and rose again, but this is not a mythical time, but the era when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea. The sacred calendar repeats the same events of Christ's life over and over again for Christians, but these events

in history and no longer at the beginning of time, "in the beginning". (With the birth of Christ, of course, time begins anew for Christians, because the Incarnation changes man's position in the cosmos.) History thus proved to be a new dimension of God's presence in the world. History becomes sacred history, which, even if from a mythical perspective, can also be found in primitive and ancient religions.

Christianity therefore leads not to a philosophy of history, but to a theology of history. God's historical interventions, above all his incarnation in the historical person of Jesus Christ, have a historical purpose: the salvation of mankind.

Hegel relates to Judeo-Christian ideology and applies it to universal history as a whole.[xxxv] The universal spirit constantly manifests itself in historical events and only manifests itself in these events. History thus becomes a theophany in its totality; everything that happened in history had to happen in this way because this is what the universal spirit wanted. This paved the way for the various historicist philosophies of the 20th century. And this is where our investigation ends, because all these re-evaluations of time and history are already subjects of the history of philosophy. All that remains to be said is that historicism is a product of the decline of Christianity: it attaches decisive importance to historical events (an idea that originated in Christianity), but only to the extent that it considers it completely impossible for any kind of soteriological, supra-historical meaning to be expressed in them.*

Regarding the concepts of time in historicism and existentialist philosophies, we should perhaps note the following: although time is no longer imagined as a "circle," these modern philosophies still reveal the same terrifying aspect of time as the Indian and Greek philosophies of eternal return. Ultimately desacralised, time appears as a fluctuating and fleeting interval that inevitably leads to death.

III. Natural sanctity and cosmic religion

For the religious person, nature is never merely "natural": it is always imbued with religious significance. This is easy to understand, since the cosmos is a divine creation: the world was created by the hand of God and is therefore sanctified once and for all. This is not merely a matter of sanctity borrowed directly from the gods, as in the case of a place or object consecrated by the divine presence. The gods have done more than that: they have already manifested the various modalities of sanctity in the structure of the world and cosmic phenomena.

The world is such that religious people, while observing it, discover holiness and thus the various manifestations of existence. First and foremost: the world exists, it is there and it has structure; it is not chaos, but cosmos; thus it proves to be a creation, the work of the gods. This divine work is always transparent to a certain degree, revealing the many aspects of holiness on its own. In the sky, infinite distance, the transcendence of God, manifests itself directly and "naturally". The earth is just as "transparent": it appears as a nourishing mother. The rhythm of the cosmos reveals order, harmony, constancy and fertility

. The cosmos as a whole is a real, living and sacred organism: the modalities of being and holiness are manifested in it. Ontophany coincides with hierophany.

In this chapter, we will try to understand how the world appears to religious people, or more precisely, how sacredness manifests itself in the structures of the world. For religious people, the "supernatural" is inextricably linked to "nature", since nature always expresses something that transcends it. We have already mentioned that a sacred stone is revered because it is sacred, not because it is stone. The sacredness manifested in the nature of the stone is the true essence of the stone. It would therefore be wrong to speak here of "naturism"[xxxvii] or "nature religion"[xxxviii] in the 19th-century sense, because it is through the "natural" aspects of the world that religious people grasp the "supernatural".

Celestial sanctity and celestial gods

Even the mere contemplation of the sky evokes a religious experience. The sky appears infinite and transcendent. It is "completely different", that is, something completely different from tiny human beings and their living space. Transcendence reveals itself to man when he becomes aware of infinite height. The concept of "the highest" involuntarily becomes an attribute of divinity. Heights inaccessible to man, the sidereal zones, transcendence, absolute reality and eternity are clothed in glory. This is where the gods dwell, where the chosen ones have arrived through certain ascension rites, and where the souls of the dead ascend, according to the beliefs of certain religions. Man as such cannot reach "the highest of the high"; this place is reserved for superhuman powers and beings. Those who ascend to heaven on the steps of some sacrament, on the ritual ladder, are no longer human. In one way or another, they become part of the order of the gods.

This is not a logical, rational process. "The heights", the supernatural, the infinite transcendent category manifests itself in the whole person - in their intellect as well as their soul. The person awakens to a comprehensive awareness of themselves. In relation to the heavens, they discover divine incomparability and their own place in the cosmos. For the heavens, by their very nature, reveal transcendence, power and eternity. Their existence is absolute because they are high, infinite, eternal and powerful.

This is what we meant when we said earlier that the gods have already manifested the different modalities of holiness in the structure of the world. The cosmos – the exemplary work of the gods – is "constructed" in such a way that the mere existence of the sky evokes a religious sense of divine transcendence. And since the existence of the sky is absolute, many primitive peoples refer to their supreme god by names that actually denote height, the sky, or weather phenomena, or simply call them "the owners of the sky" or "sky dwellers."

The highest deity of the Maori[xxxix] is called Ihó, and the word ihó means "high" or "holy." Uvoluvu, the supreme god of the Akposso Negroes[xl], means "that which is above," in the upper regions. The Selknam people[xli] of Tierra del Fuego call their god "the inhabitant of the sky" or "the one who is in the sky". Puluga, the supreme being of the Andamanese[xlii], lives in the sky; his voice is the roar of the sky, his breath is the wind; the sign of his wrath is the storm, and he punishes those who disobey his commands with lightning. The Yoruba[xliii] people of the Slave Coast call their god Oloru, which literally means "the owner of the sky". The Samoyeds[xliv] worship Num, a god who

who dwells higher than the heavens, and whose name means "sky". The Korak people[xlv] call the supreme deity "the one above", "the master of the heights", "the one who is". The Ainu[xlvi] know him as "the divine creator of the worlds", but also as Kamui, meaning "sky". And we could easily continue the list.*

These designations are also found in the religions of culturally advanced peoples who played a significant role in history. The Mongolian name for the supreme god is Tengri, meaning "sky". The Chinese Tien means both "sky" and "sky god". The Sumerian term for divinity, Dimgir, originally referred to a celestial phenomenon, something that is "bright, shining". The Babylonian Anu also expresses the concept of "sky". The supreme Indo-European god, Dhenus, means both celestial phenomenon and holy. (Cf. din: "to shine", "sun"; dyaus: "sky", "sun"; Dyaus, the Indian sky god). Zeus and Jupiter even preserve the memory of the sanctity of the sky in their names. The Celtic Taranis (from the word taran: thunder), the Baltic Perkunas (lightning) and the Proto-Slavic Pemn (cf. the Polish word piorun, lightning) show particularly clearly the later transformation of the sky gods into storm gods.*

This is not about "naturism". The heavenly god is not identified with the sky, since, as the creator of the cosmos, he also created the sky. That is why he is called "creator", "almighty", "lord", "supreme", "father", etc. The sky god is a person, not a celestial phenomenon. However, he dwells in the sky and manifests himself in weather phenomena, thunder, lightning, storms and meteors. Certain privileged structures of the cosmos - the sky, the atmosphere - are the supreme being's favourite epiphanies; his presence is manifested in what is particularly his own, in the majesty of the infinite sky, in the nerve-racking storm.

The distant god

The history of the supreme deities with a Uranian structure is also of great importance for understanding the religious history of humanity as a whole. We cannot write this history in a few pages,* but we would like to point out at least one thing that we consider particularly important: the supreme beings with a Uranian structure mostly disappear from the cult. They "distance" themselves from humans, retreat to the heavens, and become dei otiosi. We could say that after creating the cosmos, life, and humans, these gods feel "tired" to a certain extent, as if the enormous task of creation had exhausted their powers. They retreat to the heavens, leaving their sons or some kind of demiurge behind on earth to complete the work of creation. Their place is gradually taken by other divine figures, the mythical ancestors, the mother goddesses, and the god of fertility. The storm god retains his Uranian structure, but he is no longer the supreme creator god; he only participates in the fertilisation of the earth, sometimes merely as an assistant to his consort, the Earth Mother. The supreme being with a Uranian structure retains its original rank only among pastoral peoples. It occupies a special place only in religions that tend to be monotheistic (Ahura-Mazdá) or explicitly monotheistic (Yahweh, Allah).

The phenomenon of the "departure" of the supreme god can already be observed in ancient cultures. Among the Kuli people of Australia, the supreme being, Bundjil, created the universe, animals, trees and humans, but then placed his son on earth and his daughter in the sky, and withdrew from the world himself. As "lord" he sits enthroned above the clouds with a great sword in his hand. Puluga, the supreme being of the Andamanese, retires after creating the world and the first humans. The secret of this "withdrawal" corresponds to the almost complete absence of cult. There are no sacrifices, no requests, no expressions of gratitude, only a few religious customs in which

the memory of Puluga lives on, such as "holy silence", in which hunters wrap themselves up when they return to their village after a successful hunt.

The Selknam's "sky dweller" or "sky being" is eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, and creative—but creation is carried out by mythical ancestors who were created by the supreme god before he withdrew to the stars. This god now lives apart from humans and is indifferent to worldly affairs. He has no images and no priests. They only pray to him in times of illness: "You who are above, do not take my child, he is still so small!"* They only make sacrifices to him during thunderstorms.

The same is true for most African peoples. The great sky god, the supreme being, the creator and almighty, plays only an insignificant role in the religious life of the people. He is too distant or too good to require genuine worship, and is only called upon in times of greatest need. Olorun ("the owner of the sky"), the sky god of the Yoruba, for example, entrusted the completion of the creation of the world he had begun and the governance of it to a lesser god, Obatalá. He himself withdrew once and for all from earthly and human affairs; he has no temple, no statue, no priest. Nevertheless, in times of misfortune, he is still called upon as the ultimate protector.

Ndyambi, the supreme god of the Herero[xlviii], also withdrew to the heavens, leaving humanity to lesser deities. "Why should we sacrifice to him?" explains a native. "We have nothing to fear from him, because unlike our dead (the spirits of our dead), he does us no harm."** The supreme being of the Tumbuka[xlix] is too great to "take an interest in the ordinary affairs of men".*** We encounter the same situation among the Chi-speaking[l] Negroes of West Africa. Their god, Njankupon, has no cult, and they do not worship him with reverence, except in a few rare cases. Only in times of great famine, epidemics, or violent storms do people ask what they have done to offend him. Dzingbé-aldus (the "almighty father"), the supreme being of the Ewe[lj], is only invoked during droughts: "O heaven, to whom we owe our thanks, the drought is great; make it rain, so that the earth may be fresh again and the fields may yield!"* The aloofness and passivity of the supreme being is beautifully expressed in a saying of the East African Giryama[ljii]: "Mulungu (God) is above, the ancestors are below!"** The Bantu[ljiii] say: "After God created man, he did not concern himself with him at all." The Negrille[ljiv] say the same: "God has distanced himself from us!"*** The Fang people[lv], who live on the prairies of equatorial Africa, summarise their religious philosophy in the following song:

God (nzáma) is above, man is below. God is God, man is man. Everyone for
themselves, everyone in their own house.****

There is no need to multiply examples. It seems that in all these primitive religions, the supreme being has lost its religious relevance; it is absent from cults and is retreating further and further from people in mythology, until it becomes a deus otiosus. But they still remember him, and they call on him as a last resort when they have turned in vain to the other gods and goddesses, ancestors and demons. The Oraoni[lvi] express this as follows: "We have tried everything, but we can still call on you for help!" They sacrifice a white rooster to him and cry out: "O God, you are our creator! Have mercy on us!"*

The religious experience of life

"God's withdrawal" actually expresses the fact that man is becoming increasingly interested in his own religious, cultural and economic discoveries. As soon as primitive man becomes interested in the hierophanies of life, as soon as he discovers the sanctity of fertile soil and becomes excited by "more concrete" (physical, even orgiastic) religious experiences, he distances himself from the transcendent heavenly god. The discovery of agriculture meant a radical change for primitive man, not only in terms of economy, but above all in terms of the sacred order. New religious powers, sexuality, fertility, the mythology of women and the earth come to the fore. The religious experience becomes more concrete, that is, more closely connected to life. The great mother goddesses and fertility spirits are simply more dynamic and "accessible" to humans than the creator god himself.

Yet we saw that in times of greatest need, when all other attempts had failed, especially during some misfortune from heaven—drought, storm, plague—they were willing to pay the price to return to Yahweh. "And they cried unto the Lord, and said, We have sinned, because we have forsaken the Lord, and have served the Baals and the Ashtaroth. Now therefore deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, and we will serve thee." (I Samuel 12:10)

The Jews turned to Yahweh when historical catastrophes befell them and threatened them with destruction; primitive peoples remembered their supreme being in times of cosmic catastrophe. However, the meaning of returning to the sky god is the same in both cases. In extremely critical situations, when the very existence of the community is at stake, they abandon the deities who ensure and develop life in normal times and return to the supreme god.

This is the great paradox of the matter. Among primitive peoples, the deities that replaced the sky gods (such as Baal and Astarte among the Jews) were gods of fertility, wealth and abundance; in short, gods who elevated and enriched both cosmic life – vegetation, farmland, herds of animals – and human life. These gods were seemingly strong and powerful. After all, they owed their religious relevance precisely to their strength, their unlimited reserves of vitality and their fertility.

And yet, primitive peoples, just like the Jews, felt that no single great goddess or god of ploughing and sowing was capable of saving them and ensuring their existence in truly critical moments. These gods and goddesses were only capable of reproducing and making life more abundant, and even then only in normal times; they were excellent at governing the cosmic cycle, but not at saving the cosmos and human society from some kind of crisis, in the case of the Jews, a "historical" crisis.

The deities that replaced the supreme being united within themselves the most concrete and visible forces, namely the forces of life. However, precisely because of this, they specialised in "production" and lacked the more refined, "noble" and "spiritual" powers of the creator gods. Man discovered the sanctity of life, and his discovery carried him away more and more; he surrendered himself to the hierophanies of life and distanced himself from the sacredness that transcended his everyday needs.

The survival of sky symbols

But the constellations, celestial symbolism, myths and rituals of ascension, etc. retained their prominent place in the sacred order even when religious life was no longer dominated by the celestial gods. What is "above", the "high", remained a form of transcendent manifestation in any religious context. It may have disappeared from cults and been replaced by other elements in mythology, but the heavens are still present in religious life through their symbols. This celestial symbolism, in turn, inspires and carries many rituals (ascension, climbing a ladder, initiation, kingship), myths (cosmic tree, cosmic mountain, pillar connecting earth and sky) and legends (magical flight). The symbolism of the centre of the world also highlights the significance of this celestial symbolism, because it is at the "centre" that the earth connects to the sky, the model of transcendence.

We could say that even the structure of the cosmos keeps alive the memory of the supreme celestial being.

It is as if the gods created the universe to reflect their existence, because no world is possible without the vertical dimension, and this dimension alone is sufficient to evoke transcendence.

Even after celestial sanctity disappeared from actual religious life, it continued to exert its influence through symbolism. Religious symbols convey their message even when people no longer consciously understand them in their entirety. This is because symbols appeal to the whole being of man, not just his intellect.

The symbolism of water

There are two reasons why we should discuss the religious significance of water* before that of earth. Firstly, because water existed before earth. ("Darkness covered the abyss, and the spirit of God hovered over the waters," as we read in the Book of Genesis.) Secondly, because examining the religious significance of water makes it easier to understand the structure and function of symbols. Symbols play an important role in the religious life of humanity; they make the world "transparent" and enable it to "reveal" transcendence.

Water symbolises the totality of possibilities, the source and beginning, the repository of all possibilities of existence, preceding all forms and carrying all creation. The primordial map of creation is the island, which suddenly "manifests" in the middle of the river. Immersion in water, on the other hand, signifies a return to the unformed, a reconnection with the undifferentiated pre-existent state. Emergence from water repeats the cosmogonic act of formation; immersion signifies the dissolution of the pharaohs. The symbolism of water therefore encompasses both death and rebirth. Contact with water always signifies rebirth; on the one hand, because dissolution is followed by "rebirth", and on the other, because immersion makes one fertile and multiplies one's vitality. On an anthropological level, cosmogonies associated with water correspond to hylozoism, the idea that the human race was born from water. The periodic sinking of continents (Atlantis myths) corresponds on a human level to the "second death" of man (the "wetness" and "lemon" of the underworld) or initiation death by baptisers. Immersion in water does not signify a final end, either on a cosmological or anthropological level. It is a temporary fall back into the formless, which is followed by a new creation, a new life or a "new human being".

depending on whether the motif is cosmological, biological or soteriological. Structurally, "the flood" can be compared to "baptism," and the libation offered to the dead can be compared to purification sacrifices made for newborns, or to the ritual baths at the beginning of the year, which bestow health and fertility upon humans.

Whatever religious context water appears in, its function always remains the same: it breaks down and destroys forms, "washes away sins", purifies and at the same time revives. Its purpose is to prevent and reabsorb creation, but it cannot change its own modality, that is, it cannot take on any form. Water is always virtual; it remains in a germinal and latent state. Everything that has form manifests itself above water, distancing itself from it.

What is essential in this matter is that both the sacredness of water and the structure of aquatic cosmogonies and apocalypses can only become fully apparent through the symbolism of water; for this is the only "system" in which the countless manifestations of hierophany can be united.* Incidentally, this law applies to all symbolism: only the totality of symbols reveals the different meanings of hierophanies.

For example, we can only grasp the deeper meaning of "water death" if we understand the structure of water symbolism.

The history of baptism

The Church Fathers also took into account some of the pre-Christian and universal meanings of water symbolism, but they gave them new significance in relation to the historical existence of Christ. In the eyes of Tertullian[lviii], water is "the first seat of the divine spirit, who prefers it to all other elements . . . Water was the first to create living beings, so we should not be surprised that later water was able to give life in baptism... By its ancient privilege, in which it has been involved from the beginning, all natural water acquires the power of sanctification in the sacrament, provided that God is asked to do so. As soon as the words are spoken, the Holy Spirit descends from heaven and hovers over the waters, which He sanctifies with His fertility; the waters thus sanctified are themselves imbued with healing power... what once healed the body now heals the soul; what lent health in time now lends salvation in eternity..." (De Baptismo, III-V.)

By immersing oneself in water, "the old man" dies and a renewed being is born. This is expressed most eloquently by Johannes Chrysostomus,[lviii] who writes the following about the multiple meanings of Christian symbolism: "It represents death and burial, life and resurrection. We immerse our heads in the water as if in a grave, completely submerging and burying the old man; when we come out of the water, a new man appears." (Homil. in Joh., XXV, 2.)

The interpretations of Tertullian and John Chrysostom thus correspond perfectly with the structure of water symbolism. However, certain new elements from "history", namely sacred history, also contribute to the Christian evaluation of water. Baptism is first of all interpreted as a descent into the depths of water, the purpose of which is to fight a duel with a sea monster. The model for this descent is Christ's immersion in the Jordan River, which also signified immersion in the waters of death. As Cyril[lix] writes, "According to Job, Behemoth, the dragon, dwelled in the waters and swallowed the Jordan River. Since the dragon's heads had to be cut off, Jesus,

when he immersed himself in the water, bound the powerful monster so that we might have the strength to tread on scorpions and snakes."*

Added to this is the interpretation of baptism as a repetition of the flood. According to Justin[*ix*], Christ, as the new Noah, emerged victorious from the waters and became the founder of a new human race.

The flood symbolises both descent into the depths of the sea and baptism. "The flood was therefore an image, which was now complemented by baptism. . . Just as Noah defied the sea of death that engulfed sinful humanity, so the person to be baptised steps into the baptismal font, calls the sea serpent to a final battle, and emerges victorious from that battle."*

However, in the rite of baptism, parallels are drawn between Christ and Adam. This Adam-Christ parallel already occupies an important place in St. Paul's theology. "Through baptism," says Tertullian, "man regains his likeness to God." (De Bapt., V) According to Cyril, "Christianity means not only purification from sin and the grace of acceptance, but also the antitype of Christ's sufferings." The nakedness of the person to be baptised has both ritual and metaphysical significance, on the one hand because "following Christ, the person to be baptised casts off the old garment of decay and sin - the garment in which Adam wrapped himself after the Fall",** and on the other hand, because he returns to his original sinlessness, to Adam's state before the Fall. "A miracle has happened," writes Cyril, "you were naked before everyone's eyes, but you were not ashamed, because you carry within yourselves the first

The image of Adam, who was naked in Paradise and felt no shame.*

Even from these few quotations, the meaning of Christian innovations is clear: on the one hand, the Church Fathers sought correspondences between the Old and New Testaments, and on the other hand, they showed how Jesus fulfilled God's promise to the people of Israel. However, these reinterpretations of the symbolism of baptism did not contradict the widespread symbolism of water. We see everything in them: in countless traditions, Noah and the flood correspond to the deluge, which destroyed all of "humanity" ("society") except for one man, who became the mythical ancestor of a new humanity. "The water of death" is one of the leitmotifs of ancient Eastern, Asian and Oceanic mythology. Water "kills" because it dissolves and destroys all forms. But precisely because of this, it is rich in "seeds" and capable of creation. The symbolism of nakedness in baptism is not unique to the Christian-Jewish tradition. Ritual nakedness signifies wholeness and abundance; the "paradise" is characterised by the absence of "clothes" and "wear and tear" (which is, incidentally, an ancient image of time). All forms of ritual nakedness refer to some kind of timeless model, an image of paradise.

Monsters of the deep are found in many traditions. Ancestors and initiates descend into the depths and defy sea monsters; this is a typical initiation test. Of course, there are many variations of this in religious history. Dragons sometimes guard some kind of "treasure", the sacred, the sensual image of absolute reality; ritual victory over the guarding monster, i.e. initiation, corresponds to overcoming mortality. Baptism is a sacrament for Christians because it was introduced by Christ. However, it goes back to the initiation ritual consisting of a trial (the fight with the monster) and symbolic death and resurrection (the birth of a new person). This is not to say that Judaism borrowed these myths and symbols from the religions of neighbouring peoples. There was no need for this, because the

Judaism is the heir to a religious prehistory and a long religious history in which all this already existed. It was not even necessary to preserve such a symbol in its entirety. It was sufficient for a group of images from pre-Mosaic times to survive, even if only vaguely, because these images could gain extraordinary religious relevance at any time.

The universality of symbols

Some of the early Church Fathers recognised very clearly how important it was to ensure consistency between the symbols of Christianity and the common symbolic heritage of humanity. To those who denied the resurrection of the dead, Theophilus of Antioch[*ixi*] pointed to the sign (*tekméria*) that God had made known in the great cosmic rhythms. "Do not seeds and fruits rise again?" According to Clement of Rome[*lxii*], "the sun and the night show us the resurrection. The night subsides, the sun rises; the day passes, the night approaches."*

For Christian apologists, symbols were full of meaning; they revealed the sacred under the guise of cosmic rhythms. Revelation through faith did not destroy the pre-Christian meanings of symbols, but merely added new validity to them. It is true that for Christians, this new meaning overshadowed the others; it alone gave the symbol its meaning and transformed it into revelation. The resurrection of Christ was more important than the "signs" manifested in the life of the cosmos. Nevertheless, the re-evaluation was determined in some respects by the structure of the symbol system. One could almost say that the symbol of water acquired its deep meaning in the new meanings attached to it in Christianity.

The Christian faith is linked to historical revelation; in the eyes of Christians, God's incarnation in historical time ensures the validity of symbols. However, the historical (Judeo-Christian) interpretation of baptism and its symbolism did not eliminate or diminish the general symbolism of water. In other words, history is incapable of fundamentally transforming the structure of ancient symbolism. It constantly adds new meanings, but these do not destroy the structure of the symbol.

All this becomes understandable when we consider that for religious people, the world always has a supernatural significance, that is, it is a manifestation of a form of the sacred. Every part of the cosmos is "transparent". In its characteristic mode of existence, a specific structure of being, and thus of the sacred, prevails. For religious people, sacredness is the perfect manifestation of existence. Manifestations of cosmic sacredness are, to a certain extent, primordial manifestations; they occurred in humanity's most distant religious past, and later innovations in history have been unable to eliminate them.

Terra mater

An Indian prophet, Smohalla of the Umatilla tribe, refused to cultivate the land: "It is a sin," he said, "to plough or cut, tear or scratch the mother of us all. "And he added: "Should I cultivate the earth? Should I take a knife and stab my mother in her lap? Then she would no longer take me in at the moment of my death. Should I dig up and throw away the stones? Should I cut out her flesh and break her bones? Then I could no longer enter her body and be reborn. Should I cut the grass and hay and sell it

to get rich like the white people? How could I dare to cut my mother's hair?!"*

These words were spoken barely fifty years ago, but their origins go back a long way. We cannot listen to them without emotion, because they convey the image of Mother Earth with incomparable freshness and spontaneity. We encounter this image in countless forms and variations all over the world. Here, for example, is the well-known Terra mater or Tellus mater of the Mediterranean religions, who gives life to all beings. "I sing of the mother of all things," we read in the Homeric hymn (1. skk.), "she is the most ancient, she nourishes everything in the world... their food, if you wish, you can give it, you can take it away..." And in The Sacrificers (127 ff.), Aeschylus also praises the earth, "who gives birth to everything, raises it, and is fertilised again by those who grow up".

The prophet Smohalla does not tell us how humans were born from Mother Earth. American myths, however, recount what happened in the beginning, in illo tempore. The first humans lived for a certain period of time in their mother's womb, that is, in the womb of the earth, where they existed in a semi-human, undeveloped, embryonic state. At least, this is what the Lenape or Delaware Indians, former inhabitants of Pennsylvania, say. According to their myths, although the creator had already prepared everything for them on the surface of the earth, he left humans in Mother Earth's body for a while so that they could mature and develop further. Other American Indian myths speak of ancient times when Mother Earth created humans, just as she still creates shrubs and reeds today.*

It is a widespread belief that humans were born from the earth.** In many languages, humans are referred to as "born from the earth". It is believed that children come into the world from the depths of the earth: from caves, grottos, ravines, but also from springs and streams. Such ideas, whether as legends, superstitions or even metaphors, are still alive and well in Europe. Every region, almost every town and every village knows of a rock or spring that gives birth to children. These are known as children's wells, children's lakes, boys' springs, etc. Even we, as modern Europeans, feel a vague sense of mysterious connection to our native soil. This is the religious experience of tribalism; we feel ourselves to be one of the locals – a sense of cosmic structure that goes far beyond the feeling of family or kinship ties.

In death, we want to return to Mother Earth; we want to be buried in our native soil. "Run to the earth, your mother!" - so says the Rigveda (X, 18, 10). "You who are the earth, I place you in the earth!" reads the Atharva Veda (XVIII, 4, 48). "Let flesh and bone return to the earth!" is the cry at Chinese funeral rites. Roman tomb inscriptions reveal a fear that the ashes might be buried elsewhere, but above all they express the joy of being buried in one's native soil: Hic natus, hic situs est (CIL V, 5595; "Here he was born, here he is buried"); Hic situs est patriae (VIII, 2885); Hic quo natus fuerat optans erat illo reverti (V, 1703; "Here, where he was born, he wanted to return").

Humi positio and the birth of a child on the ground

Countless customs stem from the fundamental experience that the human mother represents only the great Mother Earth. Consider, for example, birth on the ground (the humi posició), a ritual found almost everywhere in the world, from Australia to China, from Africa to South America. This custom died out among the Greeks and Romans in historical times, but there is no doubt that it was once found there too ; numerous statues the goddesses of childbirth (Eileithüia, Damia,

Auxeia) kneeling, in exactly the position of a woman giving birth on the ground. In Egyptian demotic texts[^{ixiii}], "to put on the ground" means "to give birth" *

It is easy to understand the religious meaning of this custom: birth and childbirth are microcosmic versions of the act that the earth performs in an exemplary manner. The human mother merely repeats the primordial act in which life was born from the womb of the earth. Therefore, every mother must be in direct contact with the great mother, so that she can reveal this secret – the birth of life – and pass it on to her, and she can receive its blessing and maternal protection.

Even more common is the practice of laying newborns on the ground. In some European countries, it is still customary today to lay the child on the ground after bathing and swaddling it. The father then lifts the child (*de terra tollere*), thereby acknowledging it as his own. In ancient China, "both the dying and the newborn are laid on the ground... Birth and death, entry into the living family and the family of ancestors (and departure from both), have a single common threshold: the native soil. When a newborn or a dying person is laid on the ground, it is the earth that must determine whether birth or death is to be considered a valid and complete fact... The rites of laying on the ground are based on the idea that there is a substantial identity between the species and the earth. This idea is reflected in the sense of indigeneity, which was most vividly evident at the beginning of Chinese history. The belief in the connection between the earth and its inhabitants is so deep that it forms the centre of religious institutions and public law."*

Just as a child is laid on the ground immediately after birth so that its true mother can legitimise it and grant it divine protection, so too are children, and even adults, laid on the ground in the event of illness, and in some cases they are buried there. This ritual signifies rebirth. Partial or complete symbolic burial has the same religious-magical significance as immersion in water or baptism. The sick person is thus revived and reborn. The same effect is achieved by the procedure of erasing a serious sin or healing a mental illness. (Mental illness poses just as great a threat to the community as crime or physical illness.) The sinner is placed in a barrel or a pit dug in the ground, and when he comes out, he is "reborn from his mother's womb". In Scandinavia, it is therefore believed that a witch can be saved from eternal damnation if she is buried alive, grain is sown over her, and then harvested.

The initiation involves ritual death and resurrection. Among many primitive peoples, the initiate is therefore symbolically "killed", buried in a pit and covered with foliage. When he emerges from his grave, he is considered a new person, because he has been born a second time, directly from his cosmic mother.

Woman, earth and fertility

Women are thus mystically connected to the earth, and childbirth is the human equivalent of the earth's fertility. All religious experiences related to fertility and birth have a cosmic structure. The sacredness of women stems from the sanctity of the earth. Female fertility has a cosmic model, namely the fertility of Mother Earth, who brings everything into being. In some religions, Mother Earth can conceive on her own, without the help of a partner. Traces of such ancient ideas can still be found in the parthenogenesis myths of Mediterranean goddesses. According to Hesiod, Gaia (the earth) gave birth to Uranus, a being "worthy of her... to cover everything...". (The Birth of the Gods

126. skk.) Other Greek goddesses also gave birth to their children without the help of the gods – a mythical expression of Mother Earth's self-sufficiency and fertility. Such mythical ideas correspond to the belief in women's spontaneous fertility and mysterious religious-magical powers, which have a decisive influence on the life of plants. The social and cultural phenomenon of matriarchy is linked to the discovery of agriculture by women. Women were the first to plant food crops. In doing so, they became the owners of the land and its produce.* There is a cosmic model of women's magical-religious prestige and the privileged social status associated with it: the figure of Mother Earth.

In other religions, the creation of the cosmos, or at least the completion of creation, is the result of hierogamy between the sky god and Mother Earth. This cosmogonic myth is quite widespread. It is found primarily in Oceania, from Indonesia to Micronesia, but also in Asia, Africa, and both Americas.* As we have seen, the cosmogonic myth is the true myth and the model for human behaviour. Therefore, human marriage is seen as an imitation of cosmic hierogamy. "I am the sky," explains the husband in the Brhadâraṇyaka Upanishad (VI, 4, 20), "you are the earth!" The husband and wife are already identified with the sky and the earth in the Atharva Veda (XIV, 2, 71). Dido celebrates her marriage to Aeneas in a violent storm (Aeneid IV, 165 ff.); their union coincides with that of the elements; the sky embraces his wife and floods her with fertilising rain. In Greece, marriage rites imitated the example of Zeus, who secretly united with Hera (Pausanias II, 36, 2). As expected, the myth of the gods is an exemplary model for human union. However, another aspect must also be emphasised: the marriage ritual and, through it, the cosmic structure of human sexual behaviour. Non-religious people in modern societies find it difficult to grasp this cosmic and sacred dimension of marital union. For religious people in ancient societies, however, the world is full of messages. These messages are sometimes written in secret code, but there are myths that help people decipher them. As we have seen, the entire human experience can be identified with cosmic life and thus sanctified, because the cosmos is the supreme creation of the gods.

Similarly, ritual orgies also have a divine model: the hierogamy of the god of fertility and Mother Earth.* Through unrestrained sexual revelry, the fields are stimulated to greater fertility. In a sense, orgies correspond to the undifferentiated state that prevailed before creation. Some New Year's rituals therefore include orgiastic rites; social "mingling", debauchery and saturnalia symbolise a return to the formless state that preceded the creation of the world. This cosmological ritual is repeated during the "creation" of the plant world, because every new crop represents a new "creation". The idea of renewal, which we encountered in New Year's rituals, can also be found in orgiastic agricultural festivals. Here, too, the orgy is a return to the cosmic night, to the unformed, to the "water"; it is intended to ensure the rebirth of life and thus the fertility of the earth and the abundance of the harvest.

The symbolism of the cosmic tree and plant cults

Myths and rituals associated with Mother Earth are based primarily on ideas related to fertility and abundance. These are religious ideas, because fertility ultimately manifests itself in many ways as the mystery of birth and the creation of life. For religious people, the emergence of life is the deepest mystery in the world. This life comes from somewhere outside this world, "and eventually retreats again to continue in the afterlife," where, in a mysterious way, some unknown, the

remain inaccessible to most living beings. Human life is not usually perceived as a brief phenomenon between two nothingnesses. It is preceded by a pre-existence and followed by a post-existence. Not much is known about these two extraterrestrial phases of human life, but it is certain that both exist. For religious people, death is therefore not the definitive end of life, but merely another form of human existence.

All this is "encrypted" in cosmic rhythms, and in order to understand the mystery of life, we need only decipher what the cosmos expresses in its many forms of existence. It is clear, however, that the cosmos is an organism that renews itself from time to time. The mystery of the inexhaustible emergence of life is linked to the rhythmic renewal of the cosmos. The cosmos is therefore imagined as a giant tree; its mode of existence, above all its ability to constantly renew itself, is symbolically expressed in the life of the tree.

To avoid misunderstanding, this does not mean that images are simply projected from the microcosmic level onto the macrocosmic level. The tree as a "natural object" cannot express the entirety of cosmic life; on the level of profane experience, its mode of existence cannot in any way match the mode of existence of the cosmos in all its richness. At this level, plant life manifests itself only as a series of "births" and "deaths." Only a religious view of life makes it possible to read other meanings into the rhythm of plant life, primarily the idea of rebirth, eternal youth, health, and immortality. The religious concept of absolute reality is symbolically expressed in the image of the "miracle fruit", which gives humans immortality, omniscience and omnipotence, transforming them into gods.

The image of the tree not only symbolised the cosmos, but was also a sensual image of life, youth, immortality and wisdom. In addition to cosmic trees, such as the ash tree Yggdrasil in Germanic mythology, religious history knows trees of life (Mesopotamia), immortality (Asia, Old Testament), wisdom (Old Testament) and youth (Mesopotamia, India, Iran).^{*} In the eyes of religious people, therefore, the tree is the expression of everything real and sacred, everything that the gods possess by their very nature, but which only a few privileged people - heroes and demigods - are able to obtain. This is why, in myths about the search for immortality and eternal youth, the tree appears "together with its golden fruit, which stands in a distant land" (actually in the other world) and is guarded by monsters (griffins, dragons, snakes). Those who want to pick its fruit must defy the monster and kill it. This is a heroic initiation test; the victor gains eternal youth, invincibility, and absolute power, reaching a superhuman, almost divine state.

The religious values of the plant world are most powerfully and clearly expressed in these symbols of the cosmic tree, the tree of immortality and the tree of knowledge. In other words, the structure of the sacred tree and sacred plants is not manifested in specific plant species. Only the sacred reveals the deepest structures of the world; the cosmos is a "secret code" only from a religious perspective. For the religious person, the rhythms of vegetation reveal the secrets of life and creation, as well as renewal, youth and immortality. We could say that all trees and plants considered sacred (such as the Ashvatha shrub in India) owe their prominent place to the fact that they embody the archetype, the model of vegetation. On the other hand, plants are cared for and planted because of their religious value. According to many authors, all plants planted today were originally considered sacred.^{*}

It would be wrong to think that so-called vegetation cults can be traced back to some kind of profane "natural" experience, such as spring and the awakening of nature. On the contrary, the religious experience of the renewal (restarting, recreating) of the world precedes and underpins the appreciation of spring as the resurrection of nature. The mystery of the periodic rebirth of the cosmos lent religious significance to spring. Incidentally, vegetation cults do not always focus on the natural phenomenon of spring and the appearance of vegetation, but often on the sign proclaimed by the cosmic mystery. A group of boys make a ceremonial visit to the houses of the village, presenting green branches, bouquets of flowers and birds.** This is a sign of the imminent rebirth of plant life, proof that spring is coming soon. Most of these rituals are performed before the "natural phenomenon" of spring.

The desacralisation of nature

We have already mentioned that for religious people, nature is never merely "natural". The experience of radically desacralised nature is a new discovery, and one that is accessible only to a handful of members of modern society, primarily scientists. For the rest of humanity, nature is still "magic", "mystery" and "sacredness", in which traces of old religious values can be read. There is no modern person, however irreligious, who is not susceptible to the "magic" of nature. This is not only about the aesthetic, sporting or hygienic values attributed to nature, but also about a feeling that, although vague and difficult to define, can be recognised as a memory of a deeply rooted religious experience.

We would like to illustrate the change and decline in religious values related to nature with a very specific example. We have taken our example from China for two reasons: firstly, in China, as in the West, the desacralisation of nature is the work of a minority, namely scientists. On the other hand, in China and throughout the Far East, this process of desacralisation has never been fully completed. Even in the eyes of the most subtle scientists, the "aesthetic view" of nature is still imbued with a kind of religious aura.

It is well known that in the 17th century, it became fashionable among Chinese scientists to build gardens in water basins.* Rocks rose from the middle of water-filled basins, with dwarf trees, flowers, miniature houses, pagodas, bridges and people. These were called miniature or artificial mountains. These names alone reveal their cosmological significance; as we have seen, the mountain is a symbol of the universe.

However, to the delight of art lovers, these miniature gardens had a long history, or rather prehistory, that revealed a deeply religious worldview. Their precursors were pools filled with scented water representing the sea, with arched covers depicting mountains. The cosmic structure of these things is obvious. The mystical element was also represented in them, because the mountain standing in the middle of the sea symbolised the island of the blessed, paradise, where the Taoist immortals lived. So it was a kind of world unto itself, a world in miniature, which they set up in their own homes in order to become part of the mystical forces concentrated within it and to restore harmony with the world through meditation. The mountain was decorated with caves, and legends associated with them played an important role in the concept of miniature gardens. Caves are secret hiding places, the seats of Taoist immortals and initiation. They represent a paradise, which is why "it is difficult to enter". (The symbol of the "yellow gate", which we will return to in the next chapter.)

However, this entire complex of water, trees, mountains and caves, which played such an important role in Taoism, is merely a further development of a much older religious concept, the idea of the perfect landscape, which is at once a miniature world and a paradise, a source of happiness and a place of immortality. This perfect landscape of mountains and water, however, was nothing more than the ancient "sacred place" of the Chinese, where boys and girls met every spring to sing ritual refrains and engage in romantic contests. It is not difficult to imagine how this ancient "sacred place" has undergone different interpretations over time. In the earliest times, it was a privileged destination, a sacred and closed world where boys and girls occasionally met to participate in the mysteries of life and cosmic fertility. The Taoists adopted this ancient cosmological scheme of mountain and water and developed it further in a richer form (mountain, water, cave, trees) - on the smallest possible scale - into a kind of miniature paradise universe, which was full of mythical powers precisely because it was far from the profane world. Taoists gathered there to meditate.

The sanctity of the closed world can even be recognised in the scented water-filled pools with lids, which represented the sea and the islands of the blessed. Even these served meditation, just as miniature gardens did in the beginning, until the 17th century, when scholarly fashion took over and turned them into "art objects".

In this example, of course, we can never experience the complete desacralisation of the world, because in the Far East, even among scholars, the "aesthetic movement of the soul" always retains a certain religious dimension. However, the history of miniature gardens shows how the desacralisation of the world is progressing. We need only consider what this kind of aesthetic feeling has become in modern society, and we immediately understand how the experience of cosmic sacredness can become flattened and altered until it finally becomes a mere human emotion—for example, the feeling of *l'art pour l'art*.

Further cosmic hierophanies

Within the limited scope of this book, we are unable to discuss all aspects of natural sacredness. We have had to omit a large number of cosmic hierophanies. For example, sun and moon cults and their corresponding symbols, the religious significance of stones, the religious role of animals, etc. In each of these groups of cosmic hierophanies, a different structure of natural sacredness manifests itself; more precisely, the form of sacred manifestation is different in each, expressed by a specific mode of existence in the cosmos. From an analysis of the various religious values associated with stones, we can learn, for example, what they are capable of showing people as hierophanies, such as power, hardness, and durability. The hierophany of stone is true ontophany; stone exists above all else, always remaining itself, never changing. With its immutability and absoluteness, it astonishes humans and, by analogy, proclaims the immutability and absoluteness of existence before them. In religious experience, the unique nature of stone proclaims to man a kind of absolute existence that is timeless and cannot be affected by development.*

A brief analysis of the many and varied religious interpretations of the moon reveals what people once read into its rhythms. Through the phases of the moon – its "birth", "death" and "resurrection" – they became aware of their own existence in the cosmos and, at the same time, their prospects for survival or rebirth. Religious people were inspired by moon symbolism.

to connect domains that appear to have nothing in common, and ultimately to weave them together into a single "system". It was probably the religious evaluation of the rhythms of the moon that enabled primitive peoples to make their first great anthropocosmic syntheses. In connection with lunar symbolism, such heterogeneous things as birth, development, death, resurrection; or water, plants, women, fertility, immortality; cosmic darkness, life before birth, existence beyond the grave and lunar rebirth ("light from darkness"); weaving, spinning, the symbol of "the thread of life", skill, temporality, death, etc. On a very general level, lunar symbolism reveals or at least clarifies ideas related to cycles, dualism, polarity, opposition, and struggle, but also the idea of the reconciliation of opposites, the *coincidentia oppositorum*. We can talk about the metaphysics of the moon, its solid system of "truths", the specific mode of existence of living beings, that is, the mode of existence of everything in the cosmos that participates in development, growth and decline, "death" and "rebirth", in short, life. For the moon not only conveyed to religious people that death is inseparable from life, but also, and above all, that death is not final, because it is always followed by a new birth.*

The moon lends religious value to cosmic development and reconciles man with death. The sun manifests a different mode of existence. It plays no part in development; it is always in motion, while the sun remains unchanged, its form always the same. In solar hierophanies, autonomy and power, sovereignty and reason appear as religious values. In certain cultures, therefore, the solarisation of the supreme being can be observed. As we have seen, the celestial gods tend to lose their religious relevance. In some cases, the structure and powers of these gods live on in the sun gods, especially in significant historical, highly developed cultures (Egypt, the Hellenistic East, Mexico).

Many hero mythologies have a solar structure. The hero is identified with the sun; like the sun, he fights against darkness, descends into the realm of the dead, and emerges victorious. Unlike in lunar mythology, darkness here is not a mode of existence of the deity, but a symbol of everything that is not divine, and therefore a true adversary. Darkness is no longer considered a necessary stage of cosmic life; from the perspective of sun worship, it is opposed to life, form, and cognition. In some cultures, the luminous epiphanies of sun gods become sensual images of cognition. Eventually, the sun and cognition became so closely linked that late antique syncretic sun theologies gave rise to rationalist philosophy. The sun is the meaning of the world - Macrobius[lxv] unites all the gods of the Greek-Eastern world in the sun, from Apollo and Jupiter to Osiris, Horus and Adonis. (Saturnalia I, 17-23.) In Emperor Julian's[lxvi] treatise entitled *The Sun King* and Proclus'[lxvii] hymn to the sun, ideas replace sun hierophanies - a process of rationalisation takes place here, during which religion almost completely disappears.*

This desacralisation of the sun hierophanies, together with many similar processes, ultimately led to the entire cosmos being stripped of its religious content. However, as already mentioned, the definitive desacralisation of nature is only characteristic of a certain group of modern people, namely those who are truly devoid of any religious sentiment. Christianity has profoundly and decisively influenced the religious evaluation of the cosmos, but it has never rejected it. The example of the Christian writer Léon Bloy[lxviii] shows that cosmic life as a whole is still the secret code of divinity érzékelhető: "Whether az emberekben, akár az állatokban vagy a

plants, life always appears, and when that moment comes, that elusive point we call death, then, whether from a tree or a human being, it is always Jesus who departs."*

IV. Human existence and the sanctification of life

"Open to the world" existence

The primary goal of the historian of religion is to understand and help others understand the behaviour and spiritual universe of homo religiosus. This is not always easy. In the modern world, religion as a way of life and worldview can hardly be separated from Christianity. At best, Western intellectuals can only make an effort to familiarise themselves with the religious views of classical antiquity or even with certain major Eastern religions such as Hinduism or Confucianism. However commendable such attempts to broaden religious horizons may be, they never go very far. For in the case of Greece, India and China, Western intellectuals are still operating in the sphere of complex and highly developed religions and the extensive religious literature associated with them. Even if we are familiar with certain details of this religious literature and are also acquainted with some Eastern classical mythologies and theologies, this is far from sufficient for understanding the spiritual universe of homo religiosus. These mythologies and theologies have been shaped by the long-standing work of scholars; although strictly speaking they are not "book religions" like Judaism or Zoroastrianism, Christianity or Islam, they still have their holy books (India, China), or at least they were influenced by famous authors (as in Greece, for example, under the influence of Homer).

A better way to broaden our religious perspective is to familiarise ourselves with the folklore of European peoples: in these beliefs and customs, in attitudes towards life and death, many ancient "religious situations" can still be recognised. Those who study European peasant societies can gain insight into the religious world of Neolithic ploughmen. The customs and beliefs of European peasants often represent a more primitive cultural level than that reflected in classical Greek mythology.* Although the majority of the peasant population in Europe converted to Christianity more than a thousand years ago, much of this pre-Christian religious heritage is still woven into it. However, we should not think that European peasants are therefore not Christian; their religiosity is not limited to the historical forms of Christianity, but also preserves a cosmic structure that has almost completely disappeared from the experience of Christian city dwellers. We could call this religiosity primitive, non-historical Christianity. When adopting Christianity, European farmers incorporated the ancient cosmic religion into their new faith.

However, for the historian of religion who wants to understand and explain all the existential situations of homo religiosus, the problem is even more complicated. Ploughing cultures are preceded by the truly "primitive world" of nomadic herders, totemic hunters, and peoples at the stage of gathering and hunting. Anyone who attempts to understand the spiritual universe of religious people must first and foremost deal with the people of these primitive societies. To us today, however, their religious behaviour seems strange, even inappropriate, and at best very difficult to understand. However, we can only grasp a foreign world of ideas if

we insert ourselves into it, penetrate to its centre, which ensures that we have access to all its values.

For religious people in ancient societies, the world exists because the gods created it: the very existence of the world "says something". The world is not silent and incomprehensible, it is not a lifeless thing without purpose or meaning. For religious people, the cosmos "lives" and "speaks". The sanctity of the cosmos is proven by the fact that it lives, because it was created by the gods, and the gods reveal themselves to humans in cosmic life.

For this reason, from a certain level of cultural development onwards, humans consider themselves to be microcosms. They too are part of divine creation; in other words, they find within themselves the sacredness that they recognise in the cosmos. They therefore consider their own life to be identical in essence to cosmic existence; the latter, as a divine work, becomes the model for human existence. Let us mention a few examples of this. We have already seen that marriage is regarded as a hierogamy between heaven and earth. Among farmers, however, this becomes even more complicated through the identification of the earth with women. Women are identified with the seed, the seed with the male, and farming with marital union. "Woman is a living piece of earth; sow the seed of men into her!" reads the Atharva Veda (XIV, 2, 14). "Your wives are your ploughing fields." (Quran, 2, 225.) A barren queen complains: "I am like a field from which nothing grows!" In a 12th-century hymn, however, the virgin mother is praised as *terra non arabilis*, *quae fructum parturit* (unploughed land that bore fruit).

Let us try to understand the situation of a person for whom all these identifications are not mere thoughts but lived experiences. There is an extra dimension to his life: it is not only human but also "cosmic" because its structure is superhuman. We could call it "open existence" because it is not limited to the human way of life. (After all, primitive man places his role model on a superhuman plane expressed in myths.) The religious man, especially the primitive man, is "open" to the world; he is never alone, a part of the world always lives within him. However, it would be wrong to say, with Hegel, that primitive man is "buried in nature" and does not yet know how to conceive of himself as distinct from nature. The Hindu man who embraces his wife and exclaims, "I am the sky, and you are the earth," is fully aware of his own humanity and that of his wife. The South Asian farmer, who uses the same word to refer to the phallus and the spade, and who, like many other farmers, identifies seeds with the male, is well aware that the spade is a tool he has made himself and that when he cultivates his land, he is performing a task that requires a range of technical knowledge. In other words, the cosmic symbol adds a new value to an object or activity, but this does not diminish its own direct value. An existence that is "open to the world" is not an unconscious existence buried in nature. This "openness" to the world enables the religious person to know himself when he knows the world - and this knowledge, because it is religious in nature and because it relates to creation, is precious to him.

The sanctification of life

The above example reveals the perspective of people living in ancient societies. For them, life as a whole can be sanctified. This sanctification can take place in different ways, but the result is always the same.

They experience life on two planes: as human existence and as some kind of superhuman life, part of the cosmos and the lives of the gods. In the earliest times, all human organs and psychological processes, as well as all actions, probably had religious significance, because at the beginning of time, all human behaviour was created by the gods or culture-creating heroes: not only work, nutrition, love, and various forms of expression were precisely defined, but also actions that were seemingly unimportant. In the Australian Karadjeri[lxx] myth, the two culture-creating heroes assume specific body positions while performing their needs, and the Karadjeri still imitate this exemplary behaviour to this day.* We encounter nothing like this on a profane level. For non-religious people, all vital experiences – sexuality, nutrition, work and play – are desacralised. Above all, this means that these physiological acts lack spiritual meaning and thus also a truly human dimension.

But physiological acts had religious significance not only because they imitated divine models; organs and their functions also acquired religious value because they were identified with various cosmic areas and phenomena. We have already mentioned one classic example: woman as womb and Mother Earth, the sexual act as hierogamy between heaven and earth, and as the sowing of seeds in the field. However, there are many more identifications between man and the universe. Some of these come to mind involuntarily, such as the following: eye = sun, two eyes = sun and moon, top of the skull = full moon or breath = wind, bones = stones, hair = strands of hair.

However, religious historians recognise other identifications as well. These presuppose more developed symbolism and even a whole system of microcosmic and macrocosmic correspondences. Examples include the identification of the womb with the mother, or the mother with the cave, the viscera with labyrinths, breathing with weaving and spinning, veins and arteries with the sun and moon, and the spine with the axis of the world. We do not find these identifications between the human body and the macrocosm among primitive peoples. Precise systems of correspondence between man and the universe only developed fully in the great cultures (India, China, Antiquity, the Middle East, Central America), but their origins lie in ancient cultures. Among primitive peoples, we find extremely complex anthropocosmic identification systems that testify to an inexhaustible capacity for reasoning—for example, among the Dogon people living in French West Africa.

Now, these anthropocosmic identifications are of interest to us primarily insofar as they are "cryptic messages" of different life situations. We have said that religious people live in an "open" world, and their existence is "open" to the world. Religious people therefore accept an endless series of "cosmic" experiences. Such experiences are always religious because they reflect on the sanctity of the world. To understand them, we must consider that the most important physiological functions can become sacraments. Eating, for example, is associated with ritual; food is valued differently in different religions and cultures, considered sacred, a gift from the deity or an offering to the deities of the body. As we have already seen, sexual life is also ritualised and thus identified with cosmic phenomena (rain, sowing) and divine acts (the hierogamy of heaven and earth). Marriage is sometimes valued in three ways: on an individual, social and cosmic level. Among the Omaha[lxxii], for example, the village is divided into two parts, one called heaven and the other earth. Marriages can only be contracted between two exogamous parties, and they always repeat the original hierogamos, the union between earth and sky.*

These anthropocosmic identifications and, above all, the sacramentalisation of physiological life that resulted from them retained their vitality even in advanced religions. To mention just one example: sexual union as a ritual has gained great significance in Indian Tantrism. The example of India also clearly shows how a physiological act is transformed into a ritual and, with the end of the ritual era, how it can be re-evaluated as a "mystical technique". In Tantrism, the woman ultimately embodies Pakriti (nature) and the cosmic goddess, Shakti, while the man identifies with Shiva, the pure, motionless, serene spirit. Sexual union (majthuna) is above all the integration of these two principles, cosmic natural energy and spirit. One Tantric text expresses it this way: "True sexual union is the union of the supreme Shakti with the spirit (âtman); all else is merely a physical relationship with the woman." (Kulârnavâ Tantra V, 111-112.) This is no longer a physiological act, but a mythical ritual; the partners are not human beings, but "liberated" and free, like gods. Tantric texts emphasise again and again that in this case, a transformation of the physical experience takes place. "Through the same acts that cause other people to burn in the fires of hell for millions of years, the yogi attains eternal salvation."* The Bṛhadâraṇyaka Upanishad (V, 14, 8) already states: "Whatever sins the knower may seem to commit, he is still pure, immaculate, unchanging, immortal." In other words, the "knower" has a completely different world of experience than the profane.

Every human experience can therefore be transformed and relived on a different, superhuman plane.

The Indian example shows that the sacramentalisation of the organs and physiological life, which is richly attested to in all ancient cultures, can be developed into a "mystical" refinement. The re-evaluation of sexuality as a means of participation in the sacred (or, as in the Indian case, as a means of attaining the superhuman state of absolute freedom) is not without danger. In India, for example, Tantrism can lead to erroneous and horrific rituals. In the primitive world, ritual sexuality is often accompanied by orgiastic forms. However, this does not detract from the suggestiveness of the example, because it manifests a sacred sexual life that can no longer be experienced in a desecrated society.

Body, house, cosmos

Religious people live in an open cosmos and are themselves "open" to the world. They are in contact with the gods and share in the sanctity of the world. Analysing the structure of sacred space, we can conclude that religious people can only live in an "open" world; people want to settle in a "centre" where they can come into contact with the gods. Their home is a microcosm, as is their body. The identification of the home, the body and the cosmos occurs at an early stage. Let us dwell for a moment on this example, which shows how the values of ancient religiosity can be interpreted in later religions or even philosophies.

Indian religious thought has made rich use of this traditional identification of the house, the cosmos and the body. The reason for this is that both the body and the cosmos are ultimately "situations", systems of conditions that human beings take upon themselves. The spine is identified with the world pillar (skambha) or Mount Meru, the breath with the winds, the mist, the heart with "the centre of the world", etc. However, they also establish an identity between the human body and ritual. The place of sacrifice, the sacrificial instruments and actions are identified with various organs and physiological functions. The human body, which is ritually homologous with the cosmos or the Vedic altar (a kind of imago mundi

), is also identified with the house. One hatha yoga text refers to the body as "a house with one pillar and nine doors" (Gornksha Shataka 14).

Therefore, when a person consciously adapts to the exemplary situation to which they are predestined to a certain extent, they make themselves cosmic, that is, they reproduce on a human scale the system of mutual dependencies and rhythms that characterises and constitutes the world and ultimately determines the entire universe. Identification also occurs in the opposite direction; the temple and the house are regarded as human bodies. The "eye" of the dome is a term often used in various architectural traditions.* What is important here is that each of these equivalent images - cosmos, house, human body - has an upper "opening" - or at least can contain such an opening - which allows passage to another world. The upper opening of the Indian tower is also called *brahmarandhra*, a word that also refers to the upper "opening" of the skull, which plays a major role in yogic tantric techniques; it is through this opening that the soul departs when a person dies. This includes the custom of breaking the skull of a dead yogi to facilitate the departure of the soul.**

This Indian custom corresponds to beliefs that are widespread in Europe and Asia: the souls of the dead ascend through the hearth (smoke hole) or the roof, particularly through the part of the roof above the "sacred corner".* In the case of prolonged agony, one or more beams of the roof are removed, or even the entire roof is broken open. The meaning of the custom is obvious: the soul can more easily escape from the body if the other image of the body, the cosmos, the upper part of the house, is broken open. All these experiences are incomprehensible to the non-religious person, not only because death has become desecrated for them, but also because they no longer live in a real cosmos.

The Indian mystical vocabulary has preserved the identification of man and house, and especially of the skull with the roof or dome. The mystical experience of transcending the limits of human existence is expressed in a double image: breaking through the roof and rising into the air. Buddhist texts speak of arhats who "fly through the air and break through the roof of the palace"; who "fly of their own accord, break through the roof, and fly through it, rising into the air".** These richly imagistic phrases can be interpreted in two ways: on the level of mystical experience, it refers to "a phase", that is, the ascent of the soul through the *brahmarandhra*; on the metaphysical level, it refers to the cessation of the conditioned world. However, in both meanings of the "flight" of the arhats, the ontological plane is broken through and the transition from one mode of existence to another is expressed; the transition marks the passage from conditional existence to an unconditional mode of existence, that is, to perfect freedom.

In most ancient religions, "flight" signifies the attainment of a superhuman state of being (god, wizard, "spirit"), the freedom to move as one pleases; in other words, conformity to the constitution of the "spirit". In Indian thought, when the arhat "breaks through the roof" and ascends into the air, it figuratively illustrates that he has transcended the cosmos and arrived at some paradoxical, unimaginable state of being, namely, the state of absolute freedom. (This can be referred to by various names: *nirvana* or *asamskṛta*, *samādhi*, *sahaja*, etc.) On a mythological level, this exemplary act of transcending the world is illustrated by Buddha's exclamation that he broke the cosmic "egg", "the shell of ignorance", and attained "Buddha's blissful, universal dignity".*

This example illustrates how long-lived the ancient symbolism associated with human dwellings is. They express religious situations that have existed since ancient times, but their validity changes, their meaning expands, and they can be fitted into increasingly refined systems of thought. Humans "live" in their own bodies just as they do in a house or in the cosmos they have created for themselves (cf. Chapter I). Every legitimate and lasting situation presupposes integration into some kind of cosmos, a well-ordered universe modelled on the exemplary pattern, the image of creation. The inhabited area, the temple, the house, the body - all are cosmoses. However, each has its own "opening", the meaning of which varies from culture to culture. (The "eye" of the temple, the hearth, the smoke hole, brahmarandhra, etc.) The cosmos in which we live—the body, the house, the tribal territory, the given world as a whole—is in some way connected to another, otherworldly plane.

In acosmic religions, such as Indian religions after Buddhism, the opening leading to a higher plane no longer signifies the transition from the human to the superhuman order, but transcendence, the cessation of the cosmos, absolute freedom. The philosophical meaning of the egg "broken" by the Buddha and the "roof" broken by the arhats differs significantly from the ancient symbolism in which the transition from earth to heaven takes place along the world axis or the smoke hole.

Nevertheless, Indian philosophy and mysticism preferred the ancient image of the broken roof from among all the symbols suitable for denoting ontological breakthrough and transcendence. The pictorial form of transcending the human condition is expressed in the destruction of "the house", that is, the destruction of the personal cosmos that man has chosen as his dwelling place. The philosophical image of every "solid refuge" in which man has "settled down" means that man has abolished all "situations" and, instead of settling down in the world, has chosen absolute freedom, which in Indian thought is conditional on the destruction of every defined world.

It is not necessary to analyse exhaustively the values that the non-religious people of our age attribute to their bodies, homes and the universe in order to appreciate the enormous distance that separates them from the people of the primitive or Eastern cultures discussed above. Just as cosmological values no longer attach themselves to the homes of modern people, so too does their body lack any religious or spiritual meaning. In summary, we can say that in the eyes of modern, non-religious people, the cosmos has become incomprehensible, motionless and silent. It carries no message and contains no "secret code". In today's Europe, awareness of the sanctity of nature survives only among the rural population, because they still accept Christianity as a cosmic liturgy. Industrial society, especially the Christianity of the intelligentsia, has long since lost the cosmic values that were still attached to it in the Middle Ages. This does not mean that urban Christianity should be considered "decadent" or "less valuable"; we must simply acknowledge that the religious sensitivity of cities has become extremely impoverished. Modern urban Christians no longer participate in cosmic liturgy and its mysteries, just as nature participates in the Christological drama. Their religious experience is no longer open to the "cosmos". It has become a purely private experience: salvation is a problem that concerns man and his god. In the best case scenario, man feels responsible not only to God, but also to society. However, there is no place for the cosmos in this man-God-history complex. Therefore, presumably even true Christians no longer feel that the world is God's work.

Passing through the golden gate

With what we have said about the symbolism of the body-house and its anthropocosmic identifications, we have by no means exhausted this rich topic; we have had to limit ourselves to only a few aspects of it. The "house", which is both *imago mundi* and a repetition of the human body, plays a significant role in rituals and myths. In some cultures (e.g. early China, Etruria), burial urns are shaped like houses, with an opening at the top that allows the souls of the dead to enter and exit.* To a certain extent, the house-urn becomes the new "body" of the deceased. The mythical ancestor also emerges from such a beehive-shaped house, and the sun hides in such a house-urn-beehive at night, only to rise again in the morning. There is therefore a structural correspondence between the different types of transition: from darkness to light (sun), from a pre-existence to manifestation (mythical ancestor), from life to death and to a new existence after death (soul).

We have seen that every "cosmos" – the universe, a temple, a house, the human body – has an "opening" at the top. Now we can understand the meaning of symbolism even better: the opening allows the transition from one mode of existence to another, from one state of being to another. The "transition" is predetermined for every being in the cosmos: man passes from pre-life to life and finally to death, just as the mythical ancestor passes from pre-existence to existence, and the sun from darkness to light. This type of "transition" fits into an even more complex system, the main features of which we have already discussed: these include the moon as the archetype of cosmic development, the plant world as a symbol of universal renewal, and above all, the countless types of ritual repetition of cosmogony, the exemplary transition from possibility to form. All these rituals and symbols of "transition" reveal a very particular conception of human existence: by being born, man is not yet complete; he must be born a second time - spiritually. Only when they pass from an imperfect embryonic state to a perfect, "adult" state do they become fully human. In other words, the full richness of human existence can only be achieved through a series of rites of passage, successive initiations.

We will shortly discuss the meaning and function of initiation. But first, let us say something about the symbolism of "transition" as encountered by religious people in their familiar surroundings and everyday lives: in their homes, on the roads they take to work, on the bridges they cross, etc. This symbolism is already present in the structure of the house. The upper opening, as we have seen, signifies a connection with the heavens, a desire for transcendence. The threshold embodies both the boundary between "outside" and "inside" and the possibility of transition from one zone to another (from the profane to the sacred, cf. Chapter I). Above all, however, the image of the bridge and the golden gate expresses the idea of a dangerous transition, which is why mythology, burial and initiation rites are dominated by them. Initiation, death, mythical ecstasy, absolute knowledge and, in the Jewish and Christian religions, faith correspond to the transition from one mode of existence to another, and all of these bring about a real ontological change. To express this paradoxical transition (paradoxical because it always presupposes rupture and transcendence), different religious traditions very often use the symbols of the dangerous bridge and the narrow gate. In Iranian mythology, the dead cross the Chin Bridge on their way to the afterlife. For the righteous, it is nine spear lengths wide, but for the ungodly, it is as narrow as a "razor's edge". (Dinkart IX, 20, 3) Beneath the Sinvat Bridge lies the deep chasm of hell. (Videvdāt 3, 7) All mystics, such as Ardā Vīrāf, also begin their ecstatic celestial journey on this bridge.

In St. Paul's vision, a "hair-thin" bridge appears, connecting our world with heaven. We encounter the same image in Arabic authors and mystics: the bridge is "thinner than a hair" and connects the earth with the spheres of the stars and paradise. Sinners who cannot cross it are cast into hell, as in Christian tradition. Medieval legends speak of a "bridge hidden under water" and a "bridge of iron" which the hero (Lancelot)[^{lxxiv}] must cross barefoot and with his bare hands. The bridge is "sharper than a sickle," and crossing it is associated with "suffering and mortal torment." In Finnish tradition, a bridge covered with nails, spikes, and razors leads over hell; the dead and shamans walk on it in the ecstasy of their otherworldly journey. Similar descriptions can be found almost everywhere in the world.* Even later, these same images were used to express the difficulty of attaining metaphysical knowledge or, in Christianity, faith. "The path is difficult, like the edge of a razor, say the poets, and they mean the difficulty of the path that leads to the highest order of knowledge." (Katha Upanishad III, 14.) "For the gate is narrow and the path is difficult that leads to life, and few are those who find it." (Matthew 7:14)

These few examples relating to the initiation and death symbolism of bridges and gates reveal how much everyday existence and the associated "small world" can be re-evaluated on a religious and metaphysical level. (With the furnishings of the house, the tasks of everyday work, etc.) In the experience of the religious person, everyday life is transformed; they discover "secret codes" everywhere. Even the most mundane actions can signify spiritual acts. The road and walking can take on religious significance, because every road symbolises the "path of life", and every walk can be a symbol of pilgrimage, of journeying to the centre of the world.* If "owning" a "house" means choosing a permanent place in the world, then the "journeying on" and constant changing of location of pilgrims and ascetics who renounce their houses expresses their desire to leave this world and have no permanent place in it. The house is a "nest", and as the Pankavimsa Brâhmana says (XI, 15, 1), "to build a nest" means to have a hearth, children, a "home": the nest is therefore a symbol of the world of family, community and economy. Those who have chosen the path of seeking, the path that leads to the centre, must renounce their place in the family and community, the "nest", and devote themselves solely to the "journey" towards the highest truth, which in advanced religions is identified with the hidden god, Deus absconditus.**

Rites of passage

It has long been known that rites of passage play an important role in the life of religious people.* The true rite of passage is, of course, adolescent initiation, the transition from one age group to another. (The child or boy enters young adulthood.) However, we also find rites of passage at birth, marriage and death, and these are also initiations, because they are all related to fundamental changes in ontological and social status. When a child is born, it has only a physical existence; neither the family nor the community recognises it. It is only through the rites immediately following birth that the newborn becomes "alive" in the true sense of the word; it is only through these rites that it is accepted into the community of the living.

Marriage also represents a transition from one group to another. The newlywed leaves the group of unmarried people to belong to the group of family men in the future. Every marriage involves tension and danger, and thus triggers a crisis. That is why it is accompanied by a rite of passage. The Greeks called marriage telos,[^{lxxv}] a sacrament, and the marriage ritual resembled the mysteries.

Death rites are even more complex, because they involve not only a "natural" phenomenon (life – or the soul – leaving the body), but also an ontological and social change in the way of life. The deceased must undergo certain trials that determine their fate after death, whereby they must be accepted or rejected by the community of the dead. Among some peoples, only a ritual burial confirms death. Those who are not buried according to existing customs are not dead. Elsewhere, death is only valid after the funeral rites have been performed, or only when the soul of the deceased has been ritually led to a new otherworldly abode and accepted by the community of the dead. For non-religious people, birth, marriage and death are simply events affecting the individual and the family. In a non-religious view of existence, all these "transitions" have lost their ritual character and simply mean what they are: birth, death or officially recognised sexual union. Of course, such a purely secular view of life is rare even in the most secularised societies. In the near or distant future, such a completely non-religious experience may become more common. At the moment, however, it is still rare. In the secular world, we encounter the radical secularisation of death, marriage and birth, but we will soon see that discarded religious behaviours still live on in the form of vague memories and desires.

As regards the actual initiation ritual, a distinction must be made between adolescent initiation and entry into a secret society. The most important difference is that all boys undergo adolescent initiation, while only a certain number of adults enter secret societies. It is certain that the institution of male initiation is older than that of secret society initiation; it is more widespread and can be found even in the most primitive cultures, such as those of the Australians and the Tölandians. We need not recall the initiation rites in all their complexity here; we need only show that initiation already plays a major role in the religious formation of man in ancient cultures and that its primary purpose is to transform the ontological disposition of the neophytes. We consider this fact to be very important for understanding religious people: it shows that people in primitive societies, in the form in which they are "given" on the plane of natural existence, do not yet consider themselves "complete". In **order** to become a true human being, they must die to this first (natural) life and be reborn into a higher order, which is also a religious and cultural life.

In other words, primitive man places the ideal of humanity he strives for on a superhuman plane. Firstly, this means that they only become fully human when they transcend "natural" humanity and, in a sense, leave it behind them; because initiation is, above all, the paradoxical, supernatural experience of death, resurrection or rebirth. Secondly, it means that the initiation rites, which involve trials, symbolic death and resurrection, were established by the gods, culture-creating heroes or mythical ancestors. They are therefore superhuman, and by performing them, the neophyte imitates some kind of superhuman divine behaviour. This is important because it shows once again that religious people want to be different from what they find themselves to be on a "natural level" and that they want to become like the ideal image revealed in myths. Primitive man strives for a religious ideal, and this striving already contains the seeds of all the later ethics of more advanced societies. In modern, non-religious society, initiation as a religious act naturally no longer occurs. However, as we shall see, its model lives on in a strongly desacralised form in the modern world.

The phenomenology of initiation*

Initiation usually involves three types of revelation: the revelation of the sacred, death, and sexuality.* All of these experiences are unknown to the child; the initiate knows them, accepts them, and builds them into his new self. The neophyte sheds his childish, profane, not yet reborn life and is reborn into a new, sanctified existence, and thus into a way of being that allows for cognition and knowledge. The initiate is not only "newly born" or "resurrected"; he is also a person who knows and understands the mysteries and who has had a metaphysical revelation. During his "training" in the wilderness, he learns the sacred secrets, the myths about the gods and the origin of the world, the true names of the gods, and the role and origin of the ritual tools used in the initiation ceremonies ("zugattyú", flint knives, etc.). Initiation signifies spiritual maturity, and we always encounter the same thing throughout the religious history of humanity: the initiate is the one who has learned the mysteries, the one who knows something.

The ritual always begins with the neophyte separating from his family and retreating alone into the wilderness. This in itself is a symbol of death: the forest, the jungle and the darkness symbolise the afterlife, the "underworld". In some countries, it is believed that a tiger carries the candidate on its back into the jungle: the wild animal embodies the mystical ancestor, the initiation master, who guides the boy into the underworld. Elsewhere, there is a strong belief that the neophyte is swallowed by some kind of monster, in whose stomach the cosmic night reigns. This is the equivalent of embryonic existence on both the cosmic and human planes. There are initiation huts in many places in the wilderness. This is where the young candidates undergo some of their trials, and where the others inform them of the secret traditions of the tribe. The initiation hut is a symbol of the womb.* The death of the neophyte is a return to the embryonic state, but this is to be understood not only in terms of human physiology, but also cosmologically: the foetal state corresponds to a possible temporary return to the pre-cosmic world.

Other rituals illuminate the symbolism of initiation death. Among some peoples, candidates are buried in freshly dug graves or covered with branches while they lie motionless, like the dead. Or they are rubbed with white flour to make them look like ghosts. The neophytes imitate the behaviour of spirits; they do not use their fingers to eat, but, like the souls of the dead, they take their food directly with their teeth. Finally, there are, of course, many different meanings to the tortures to which they must submit. However, they have one meaning in common: the neophyte is tortured and mutilated by the initiation demons, i.e. the mythical ancestors. These physical sufferings reflect the situation of the candidate who is "devoured" by the animal demon, mutilated and consumed in the bowels of the initiation monster in its revenge. The mutilations (tearing out teeth, cutting off fingers, etc.) are also symbols of death. Most of these mutilations are related to the moon. The moon disappears from time to time, dies, and is reborn after three nights. Moon symbolism suggests that death is the primary condition for all mystical rebirth.

In addition to special operations such as circumcision and subincision, as well as initiation mutilations, other external signs also refer to death and resurrection - namely tattooing and scarification. The mystical symbolism of rebirth is also evident here in many forms. The candidates are given new names, which from then on become their real names. Some tribes believe that the young initiates have completely forgotten their former lives. Immediately after initiation, they are fed like small children and led by the hand; like children, they are taught everything anew. In the bush, they usually learn a new language, at least the secret vocabulary that only the

initiates can understand. With initiation, everything begins anew. The symbolism of second birth is sometimes expressed quite concretely. Among some Bantu peoples, young boys undergo a "rebirth" ceremony before circumcision.* The father sacrifices a ram, and three days later, after the child has climbed onto the bed and cried like a newborn, he wraps the child in the ram's stomach and skin. The child remains in the ram's skin for three days. Among this people, the dead are buried in ram skins and in the foetal position. The mythical symbolism of ritual dressing in animal skins for rebirth can also be found in highly developed cultures (India, Ancient Egypt).

In the initiation process, the symbolism of death is almost always accompanied by the symbolism of birth. In this context, death represents transcending the profane, unsacred way of life, the way of life of the "natural man" who knows nothing about religious matters and is spiritually blind. The mystery of initiation gradually reveals the true dimension of existence to the neophyte; initiation introduces him to the sacrament and thus obliges him to assume his human responsibility. We can therefore conclude that in all ancient societies, entry into spiritual life is expressed through the symbolism of death and rebirth.

Male and female associations

We find the same trials and initiation procedures in the admission rites of male associations. However, as already mentioned, membership in male associations is already a sign of being chosen; although everyone would like to belong, not everyone who has undergone adolescent initiation belongs to the secret association.

To mention just one example: among the Mandja and Banda tribes of Africa [Lxxvi], there is a secret society called Ngakola. According to the myth told to neophytes during initiation, Ngakola was a monster that killed people: it swallowed them and then spat them out again. The neophyte is led into a hut that symbolises the monster's body. He hears Ngakola's gloomy voice while being whipped and tortured, because he believes he is in Ngakola's stomach, which is digesting him. After various further trials, the initiation master finally announces that Ngakola, having swallowed the neophyte, has spat him out again.

So here, too, we encounter the same symbolism of death (swallowing) that played such an important role in the initiation of adolescents. The rites of initiation into the secret society are identical to those of adolescent initiation: confinement, torture and trials, death and resurrection, renaming, teaching of a secret language, etc.

There are also female initiations. However, we should not expect to encounter the same symbolism, or more precisely, the same symbolic expressions in female initiation rites and mysteries as in male initiations and brotherhoods. However, one common element stands out: at the heart of these rites and mysteries lies a profound religious experience in both cases. Attaining holiness, as it is revealed to women who embrace their femininity, is precisely the goal of initiation rites, both in adolescent initiations and in secret societies for women (women's associations).

Initiation begins with the first menstruation. This physiological symptom represents a kind of break: the girl's departure from her familiar world. She is immediately separated and isolated from the community. The separation takes place in a separate hut, in the wilderness or in a dark corner of the dwelling. Menstruation

The young girl must remain in a specific, rather uncomfortable position, avoiding sunlight and human contact. She must wear special clothing, a sign or a certain colour reserved for her, and she must eat raw food.

The isolation and confinement to a corner of the house – dark – is reminiscent of the initiation death of a boy isolated in the forest or locked in a hut. However, there is one difference between the two: girls are isolated immediately after their first menstruation, individually, while boys are isolated from the others in groups. This difference can be explained by the fact that in girls, the end of childhood is marked more by physiological changes. Eventually, however, the girls also form a group, and the initiation is then carried out jointly, led by elderly women.

As for women's associations, they are always connected to the mystery of birth and fertility. The secret of childbirth, the discovery by women that they create life, is a religious experience that cannot be translated into expressions from the male world of experience. It is understandable that childbirth sometimes inspires secret female rituals that develop into real mysteries. Traces of such mysteries have survived even in Europe.* As with men, there are many types of societies among women, in which secrecy and mystery are becoming increasingly profound. First, there is the general initiation, in which all girls and newlyweds take part, and then the next step, the institution of women's associations. Then there are the women's mystery societies that still exist in Africa today, which are similar to the closed groups of ancient maenads[lxxvii]. It is well known that these women's mystery societies survived for a long time - just think of the witches of medieval Europe and their ritual gatherings.

Death and initiation

The symbolism and ritual of swallowing play an important role in initiations, heroic legends and death myths. The symbolism of returning to the body cavity always has a cosmological meaning. Together with the neophyte, the whole world symbolically falls back into the cosmic night so that it can be recreated, that is, revived. As we have seen (Chapter II), the myth of the creation of the world is recited for healing purposes. In order for the patient to be healed, they must be born again, and the ancient model of birth is cosmogony. Time must be turned back, the moment of dawn before creation must be regained, which on a human level means returning to the "clean slate" of existence, to the absolute beginning, where nothing has yet been sullied, nothing has yet been corrupted.

Penetrating the monster's stomach – or symbolically "burying" it, locking it in the initiation hut – signifies a return to primordial darkness, to cosmic night. Emerging from the stomach – or the dark hut or "initiation tomb" – is equivalent to cosmogony. Initiation death replicates the exemplary return to chaos, which also enables the repetition of cosmogony and prepares for rebirth. The return to chaos is sometimes not only symbolic but also real – for example, in the initiation illnesses of future shamans, which were often considered to be real mental illnesses. In such cases, a complete crisis ensues, sometimes leading to the disintegration of the personality.* "Spiritual chaos" proves that the profane person is prone to "disintegration" and that a new person must be born.

We now understand why the same initiation pattern recurs in all mysteries – in adolescent rites as well as in rites of admission to secret societies: suffering, death and resurrection (i.e. rebirth). Above all, however, we can clearly see that primitive societies attempt to overcome death by transforming it into a rite of passage. In other words, in the eyes of primitive people, man is always just an insignificant being who dies primarily for the sake of profane life. This view extends to the point that death is regarded as the highest initiation, the beginning of a new, spiritual existence. Moreover, birth, death and resurrection (i.e. rebirth) are understood as three moments of one and the same mystery, and ancient man focuses all his spiritual power on ensuring that there is no break between these moments. We cannot grasp any one of these three moments. Movement and rebirth continue unabated. If we want something to succeed – having a child, building a house or achieving a spiritual goal – we must tirelessly repeat the cosmogony. This is why the cosmogonic meaning of initiation rites can be found everywhere.

"Second birth" and spiritual procreation

Death and rebirth play an important role in more advanced religions as well. A famous example of this is the Indian sacrifice. Its purpose is to enable us to reach heaven after death, thus to be close to the gods and, moreover, to acquire divine qualities (devâtma). Through sacrifice, they strive to achieve a superhuman existence, so the goal is similar to that of ancient initiations. However, the sacrificer must first be consecrated by the priests, and this consecration (dîksâ) involves a system of initiation symbols that promotes birth; more precisely, dîksâ ritually transforms the sacrificer into a foetus and allows them to be born a second time.

The texts dwell at length on the system of agreements through which the sacrificer goes through the process of returning to the womb and being reborn.* The Aitareya Brâhmana, for example, says (I, 3): "The priests transform those whom they consecrate into foetuses. They sprinkle them with water; the separate barn is the birth mother who performs the dîksâ. In this way, they admit him to his rightful birth mother. They cover him with cloth; this is the amnion. . . . On top of this, they place the skin of a black antelope, because the chorion[lxxviii] is located above the amnion. . . . He clenched his fist, because the foetus does the same while in the womb, and so does the child when it is born...** He takes off the antelope skin when he wants to bathe, because foetuses are born without the chorion. He goes to the bath fully clothed, because the child is born with the amnion."

Sacred knowledge and wisdom are considered to be the fruits of initiation; in both ancient India and Greece, the symbolism surrounding birth is linked to the awakening of the highest consciousness. Socrates compared himself to a midwife for a reason: he helped people awaken to their own consciousness – he was an instrument in the birth of the "new man". We encounter the same symbolism in the Buddhist tradition: the monk renounced his family name and became a "son of Buddha" (sakya-putto), because in this way he was reborn into the "lineage of saints" (ariya). Kassapa called himself "the son of the happy natural one," who was "born from his mouth, from the dhamna (teaching), who was shaped by the dhamna," etc. (Samyutta Nikâya II, 221.)

This initiation birth involves the death of the profane self. This pattern has survived in both Hinduism and Buddhism. The yogi "dies to this life" in order to be reborn in another state of being, that is, to be part of salvation. Buddha taught us how to cast off the profane

human way of life—the way of slavery and ignorance—and be reborn into the freedom, happiness, and unconditioned nature of nirvana. The Indian terminology for initiation rebirth is reminiscent of the ancient symbolism of the "new body" that the neophyte acquires during initiation. Buddha himself proclaims: "I have shown my disciples how they can create from their present body, consisting of the four perishable elements, another body consisting of spiritual substance (rupim manomayam), whose members are perfect and which is endowed with transcendental powers (abbinindriyam)."*

The symbolism of the second birth was adopted and reinterpreted by Alexandrian Judaism and Christianity. When Philo speaks of birth into a higher life, the life of the spirit, he often uses the motif of procreation (cf. e.g. Genesis 20). St Paul speaks in several places of "spiritual sons" whom he begot through faith: "To Titus, my true son in the common faith." (Letter to Titus, I, 3.) "I beg you for Onesimus, my son, whom I have begotten in my imprisonment." (Letter to Philemon, 10.)

The differences between St. Paul's "sons born of faith," Buddha's "sons," the new people "born" by Socrates, and the "reborn" of primitive initiations are obvious. The neophytes of ancient societies were "killed" and "awakened" by the power of the rite itself, just as the sacrificial Hindu was transformed into a "foetus". Buddha, on the other hand, "begot" with his "mouth", that is, by imparting his teachings (dhamna); through the highest order of knowledge revealed in the dhamna, the disciple was born into a new life that was able to lead him to the threshold of nirvana. Socrates merely wanted to practise the work of a midwife; he helped to "give birth" to the true human being that everyone carries deep within themselves. St Paul saw his situation differently: with the help of faith, that is, through a mystery established by Christ himself, he begot "spiritual sons".

From religion to religion, from one gnosis and wisdom teaching to another, the ancient schema of the second birth is enriched with new values, and these values sometimes fundamentally change the content of the experience. Yet there always remains a common element, an unchanging quantity, which we could define as follows: whoever wants to attain spiritual life must die to the profane way of life and thus be reborn.

Sacred and profane in the modern world

Although we have examined initiations and rites of passage in some detail, we have by no means exhausted the subject, but have at best highlighted a few of its essential features. In order to understand homo religiosus, we have had to ignore a whole series of important socio-religious figures, such as the ruler, the shaman, the priest and the warrior. This little book must necessarily remain brief and incomplete; it can be nothing more than a hasty introduction to an immeasurably vast subject.

This field is immeasurably vast, because it concerns not only religious historians, ethnographers and sociologists, but also historians, psychologists and philosophers. Understanding the situation and spiritual universe of religious people represents progress in our general knowledge of humanity. Of course, history has long since moved beyond most of these conditions characteristic of religious people in primitive societies and ancient civilisations. However, they have not disappeared without a trace; they have contributed to shaping us into who we are, and therefore form part of our own history.

Religious people take on a unique way of being in the world, and this way of being, despite all the differences in the forms of religious history, is always recognisable. Whatever historical context homo religiosus finds himself in, he always believes in the existence of the sacred, which transcends our world but manifests itself in it, thereby sanctifying it and making it real. He believes that life has a sacred origin and that human existence realises all its possibilities to the extent that it is religious, that is, part of reality. The gods created man and the world, the culture-creating heroes completed the act of creation, and the history of all these divine and semi-divine works is contained in myths. When humans imitate the behaviour of the gods, they come closer to them and make the story of holiness present again, thus becoming part of the realm of reality and significance.

It is easy to see how this way of being in the world differs from the existence of a non-religious person. First and foremost, a non-religious person rejects transcendence, accepts the relativity of "reality," and perhaps even doubts the meaning of existence. The great cultures of the past also knew non-religious people, and it cannot be ruled out that such people already existed in ancient cultures, although sources have so far revealed nothing about this. Nevertheless, it was only in modern European society that non-religious people fully emerged. The modern non-religious person takes on a new existential position: he sees himself solely as a subject and actor in history and rejects transcendence. In other words, he does not accept any human nature other than the human condition recognisable in various historical situations. Man is the creator of himself, and he can only truly be so to the extent that he desacralises himself and the world. The sacred stands between him and his freedom. He cannot become himself until he has completely stripped himself of mystery. He cannot be truly free until he has killed the last god.

It is not our task here to discuss this philosophical attitude. We will only note that modern, non-religious people accept a tragic existence, and their existential choices are not lacking in grandeur. But this non-religious person emerged from homo religiosus; he developed from the situations in which his ancestors lived. In fact, he is the result of a process of desacralisation; just as "nature" is the product of the gradual secularisation of the divine cosmos, so too is the profane person the product of the desacralisation of human existence. This means, however, that the irreligious man came into being in opposition to his predecessors, insofar as he sought to "empty himself" of all religiosity and superhuman meaning. He is only himself insofar as he has "freed" and "purified" himself from the "superstitions" of his ancestors. In other words, whether they want to or not, profane people still retain traces of religious behaviour, only these traces are stripped of their religious meaning. Whatever they do, they are eternal. They cannot completely erase their past because they themselves are a product of that past. He is made up of a series of denials and renunciations, but he is still haunted by the realities he has rejected and denied. He wanted his own world, and so he desacralised the world in which his ancestors lived; but to do so, he had to turn against their behaviour, and he feels that this behaviour, in one form or another, may still manifest itself at the deepest level of his being.

However, as already mentioned, completely irreligious people are rare even in the most desacralised modern societies. Most "non-religious" people still behave religiously, even though they are not aware of it. We are not referring here to the countless "superstitions" and "taboos" of modern people, which all have religious-magical structures and origins. The modern person who

modern people who consider themselves irreligious and identify as such have a whole - disguised - mythology and many "degraded" rituals. New Year's celebrations or house blessings, for example, as already mentioned, although they have become secularised, are still reminiscent of renewal rituals in their structure. The same applies to celebrations and festivities held on the occasion of marriage, childbirth, starting a new job or promotion.

An entire book could be written about the myths of modern man, his favourite plays, and the mythology disguised as the books he reads. Cinema, this "dream factory", uses countless mythical motifs: the battle between the hero and the monster, the trials and tribulations of initiation, exemplary figures and images (the "girl", the "hero", the "paradise landscape", "hell", etc.). Even reading has a mythological function: not only does it replace the myth-telling of ancient societies and the poetry that is still alive today in the oral traditions of European village communities, but above all it creates an opportunity for modern man to "step out of time", just as myths did in the past. Whether we "kill time" with a crime novel or enter the distant universe of a novel, reading lifts modern man out of his personal time, embeds him in other rhythms, and allows him to live in another "story".

The vast majority of "non-religious" people are not actually free from religious behaviour, theologies and mythologies. These people are sometimes covered with a whole rubbish heap of religious-magical ideas, though these are distorted to the point of caricature and therefore difficult to recognise. The desecralisation of human existence has often led to hybrid forms of low magic and monkey religion. We are not referring here to the countless "small religions" that flourish in most modern cities, nor to the pseudo-occult, neo-spiritualist or quasi-hermetic churches, sects and schools, because all these phenomena still belong to the sphere of religiosity. Nor do we mean the various political movements and social prophecies whose mythological structure and religious fanaticism are easily recognisable: just think of the mythological structure and eschatological content of communism. Marx rediscovered and further developed one of the great eschatological myths of the Asian-Mediterranean world: the redemptive role of the righteous (the "chosen ones", the "anointed ones", the "innocents", the "apostles" - in our time, the proletariat) whose suffering is destined to change the ontological state of the world. The myth of the golden age, which according to many traditions marks the beginning and end of history, accurately describes a classless society and the disappearance of historical tensions arising from it. Marx expanded this venerable myth with a thoroughly Judeo-Christian messianic ideology: just think of the prophetic and soteriological role he assigns to the proletariat, and think of the final battle between Good and Evil; we can identify this without further ado with the apocalyptic battle between Christ and the Antichrist, from which, of course, the former emerges victorious. Marx characteristically adopts the Judeo-Christian eschatological hope for the absolute end of history, and in this he differs from other historicist (e.g. Croce and Ortega y Gasset [lxxix]), which regard historical tensions as inherent in the nature of human society and therefore impossible to eliminate completely.

But it is not only in "minor religions" and political mysticism that we encounter disguised and distorted religious behaviour: it can also be found in movements that loudly proclaim themselves to be secular, even anti-religious. In the cult of nudity or in movements advocating absolute sexual freedom, we must recognise ideologies that bear traces of a "longing for paradise", a desire for the

paradisiacal state that prevailed before the Fall, when there was no sin and no rift between the desires of the body and the conscience.

It is also interesting to observe how many elements of initiation still remain in the actions and gestures of non-religious people today. Of course, we are not referring to situations in which certain types of initiation continue to exist in a reduced form: such as war, especially combat (particularly in aviation), in which "tests" similar to traditional combat initiation occur, even though combatants today are no longer aware of the deeper meaning of their "tests" and therefore hardly participate in their broader mythical initiatory effect. Even such distinctly modern techniques as psychoanalysis preserve the "pattern" of initiation. The patient is asked to delve deep into himself, to relive his past, to confront his traumatic experiences again. This dangerous procedure resembles the descent into hell and the battle with "monsters" that play a role in initiation. Just as the initiate had to emerge victorious from these trials, just as he had to "die" and "rise again" before entering into a fully responsible existence open to spiritual values, so too must the analysed modern man confront his "unconscious," populated by spirits and monsters, in order to find spiritual health and integrity there, and thus the world of cultural values.

Initiation is so closely linked to the human condition that many of modern man's actions and gestures still repeat initiation rituals. In the "struggle for life", in the "trials" and "difficulties" of a particular profession or career, certain initiation tests often recur: through the "blows" that are dealt to them, the "sufferings" and moral or even physical "torments" that they go through, young people "measure" themselves, recognise their potential, become aware of their strength, and ultimately become themselves, while at the same time becoming spiritually mature and creative (of course, within the framework of spirituality in the modern sense). For all human existence comes into being through trials, through the repeated experience of "death" and "resurrection". Within the scope of religion, it is therefore customary to base existence on initiation; indeed, we could almost say that human existence, when fulfilled, is itself an initiation.

The majority of non-religious people still cling to pseudo-religions and debased mythologies. This should come as no surprise, since we have already seen that the profane man is a descendant of homo religiosus and has no way of disregarding his own history, of completely eradicating the behaviour of his religious ancestors who made him what he is. This is all the more true because their existence is largely fuelled by impulses that spring from the depths of their being, from the realm known as the unconscious. The pure rationalist is an abstraction that cannot be found anywhere in reality. Every human being is composed of conscious activity and irrational experiences. The content and structure of the unconscious show a surprising similarity to the images and figures of mythology. This is not to say that myths are "products" of the unconscious; the very nature of myth is that it manifests itself as myth, that is, it makes known that something has been expressed in an exemplary way. Myth is as little a "product" of the unconscious as Madame Bovary is an adulteress.

No: the contents and structures of the unconscious are timeless, mainly the result of critical life situations, and therefore the unconscious is characterised by a religious aura. This is because every existential crisis calls into question the reality of the world and the presence of man in it: in essence, a "religious" crisis, because in ancient cultures, existence was synonymous with the sacred. As we have seen, the experience of the sacred

It forms the basis of the world, and even the most basic religion is primarily ontology. In other words, insofar as the unconscious is the result of countless existential experiences, it necessarily resembles the various religious universes, because religion is the exemplary solution to every existential crisis. This solution is exemplary not only because it can be repeated an infinite number of times, but also because it is attributed a transcendental origin and is therefore accepted as a revelation from another, superhuman world. The religious solution not only eliminates the crisis, but also opens up existence to values that are no longer dependent on chance and are not private in nature; through it, man can transcend his personal limitations and reach the world of the spirit.

It is not our task here to list all the consequences that arise from the connection between the content and structure of the unconscious and the validity of religion. We only want to refer to this connection in order to show that even people who are openly irreligious retain religiously oriented behaviour at the deepest level of their being. However, the "private mythologies" of modern man – his dreams and fantasies – no longer rise to the ontological rank of myths. The reason for this is precisely that they are not experienced by the whole person and therefore do not transform a private situation into an exemplary one. Similarly, although the dream and fantasy experiences of modern man are "religious" in a formal sense, they no longer coalesce into a worldview, as they do in *homo religiosus*, and do not form the basis of any particular behaviour. An example may help to illustrate the difference between these two types of experience. The unconscious constantly provides modern man with countless symbols, and each symbol must convey a specific message and fulfil a specific mission, the aim of which is to preserve or restore spiritual balance. As we have seen, symbols not only make the world "open", but also bring man to the universal. With their help, man leaves his private situation and "opens up" to the general and universal. Symbols revive individual experience and transform it into a spiritual act, a metaphysical grasp of the world. In front of any tree that is perceived as a symbol of the world tree and an image of cosmic life, people in pre-modern societies find their way to the highest spirituality, because if they understand the symbol, they are able to experience the universal. The religious view of the world and the ideology associated with it enable them to appreciate and "open up" this individual experience to the universal. The image of the tree also frequently appears in the imagery of modern non-religious people, as a symbol of their deeper life and the drama that plays out in their unconscious, on which the integrity of their spiritual life and thus their entire existence depends. However, as long as the symbol of the tree does not awaken the whole consciousness of the person and "open" it to the universal, we cannot say that it fully fulfils its task. In such cases, it only partially "rescues" the person from their individual situation; for example, by helping them overcome some internal crisis and temporarily restoring their threatened spiritual balance; it does not elevate them to spirituality or reveal its true structure to them.

Thus, although the non-religious people of modern societies still draw nourishment and support from the activity of their unconscious, they are no longer able to see or experience the actual religious world. They provide unconscious solutions to the difficulties of their existence, and in this respect they also fulfil the function of religion. In a sense, we could even say that in the vague unconscious of modern people who call themselves non-religious, religion and mythology have become "occult" - which also means that such people have the potential to regain the religious experience of life in the depths of their souls. From a Christian point of view, it could be said that "non-religiousness" corresponds to man's new "fall into sin" non-religious man lost the

the ability to consciously experience religion and thus understand and acknowledge it, but deep down he still preserves the memory of religion, just as after the first "fall" his ancestor, primitive man, became spiritually blind, yet retained enough cognitive power to still find traces of God in the world. After the first "fall into sin," religiosity sank to the level of the tortured consciousness, and after the second, it fell even deeper, into the abyss of the unconscious; it had now become "what we have forgotten."

This is where the religious historian's considerations end and the set of questions that fall within the purview of the philosopher, psychologist and theologian begins.

Foreign words and expressions occurring in the volume

Ab initio - at the beginning; that is, at the beginning of time
Ab origine - from the beginning
Anthropocosmic - the conception of the cosmos as modelled on the concrete, physical human being
Antitype - prototype, image
Archetype - archetype
Axis mundi - axis of the world
Coincidentia oppositorum - coincidence of opposites
Dei otiosi - idle gods
Deus absconditus - hidden god
Eschatology - the doctrine of last things, belief in the finality of the individual and creation
Gnosis - knowledge, understanding
Hierogamy - divine union
Hierophany - manifestation of sacred reality
Homo religiosus - religious man
Humi positio - placing on the ground; that is, laying a newborn or dying person on the bare ground
Illud tempus - that time; that is: primordial time, original time or the period closed by the Gospels
Imago mundi - mirror image of the world
Imitatio dei - imitating God, following God
In aeternum - in eternity
Incipit vita nova - a new life begins
In illo tempore - in that time; that is, in the primordial time
In principio - in the beginning; that is, at the beginning of time
Cosmology - theory or science dealing with the spatiality and temporality of the universe
Cosmogony - theory dealing with the creation of the world or the formation of the universe
Majestas - majesty, highness, dignity
Mysterium tremendum - terrifying mystery
Mysterium fascinans - fascinating mystery
Neophyte - a person who has recently converted to a religion, or a new follower of a theory
Numen - divinity
Omphalos - the navel of the earth
Ontophania - self-revelation, the unveiling of true being
Orbis terrarum - the earth
Orientatio - orientation
Roma quadrata - square Rome; that is, the Palatine district of ancient Rome
Soteriology - the doctrine of salvation
Tabernacle - sacrament house, tabernacle, sanctuary
Theophany - manifestation of divinity or divine reality
Terra mater - Mother Earth
Universalis columna - pillar of the universe

Notes

* Cf. M. Eliade: Die Religionen und das Heilige, Salzburg, 1954. 27. Skk

* Cf. M. Eliade: Der Mythos der ewigen Wiederkehr. Düsseldorf 1953, 23. Skk.

- * B. Spencer and F. J. Gillen: *The Arunta*, London 1926. 388. O.
- * Werner Müller: *Weltbild und Kultur der Kwakiutl-Indianer (Worldview and Culture of the Kwakiutl Indians)*, Wiesbaden, 1955. 17-20. O
- ** P. Arndt: *The Megalithic Culture of the Nad'a* (*Antropos*, 27, 1932), 61-62. O
- * Cf. *Der Mythos der ewigen Wiederkehr*. C. literary references in our book, 21. Skk.
- * A. E. Wensinck and E. Burrows, quoted in: *The Myth of Eternal Return*, 26. O.
- ** A. E. Wensinck, quoted *ibid.* 28. O.
- * M Granet, in: *Eliade: Die Religionen und das Heilige*, p. 426.
- ** L.-I. Ringbom: *Graltempel und Paradies*, Stockholm, 1951. p. 255.
- *** Sal-dar, 84, pp. 4-5 *id.* Ringbom, 327. O.
- **** The relevant material was collected and interpreted by Ringbom, *id.* m. 294. Skk.
- * Cf. *Mythos der ewigen Wiederkehr*, 28. Skk. And 236. Skk.
- * For references to this, see: *Der Mythos der ewigen Wiederkehr*, p. 29.
- ** Quoted by W. W. Roscher in: *Neue Omphalosstudien* (*Abh. D. königl. Sächs. Gesellschaft d. Wiss., Phil Klasse* 31, 1915,) 16. O.
- * Cf. C. Tj. Bertling: *Vierzahl, Kreuz und Mandala in Asien*, Amsterdam 1954, 8. Skk.
- ** See references in Bertling, *op. cit.*, pp. 4–5.
- * Materials and interpretation, see Werner Müller: *Die blaue Hütte*, Wiesbaden 1954. 60. Skk.
- ** F. Altheim and Werner Müller: *Kreis und Kreuz*, Berlin 1938. 60 ff.
- *** W. Müller, *op. cit.*, 65 ff.
- * M. Eliade: *Die Religionen und das Heilige*, 420. O.
- * Cf. M. Eliade: *Le Chamanisme et les techniques archaïques de l'extase*, Paris 1951, 357 ff.
- ** Wilhelm Schmidt: *Der heilige Mittelpfahl des Hauses*, *Anthropos* 35-36, 1940-1941, p. 967.
- * S. Stevenson: *The Rites of the Twice-Born*. Oxford 1920, p. 354.
- * Cf. Paul Sartori: *Über das Bauopfer*, in: *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 30, 1938, pp. 1-54.
- * Cf. M. Eliade: *Der Mythos der ewigen Wiederkehr*, p. 18.
- * Hans Sedlmayr: *Die Entstehung der Kathedrale*, Zurich 1950, p. 119.

- * Werner Müller: Die blaue Hütte, Wiesbaden 1954, p. 133.
- * H. Usener: Götternamen, 2nd ed. Bonn 1920, pp. 191 ff.
- Werner Müller: Kreis und Kreuz, Berlin 1938, 39; cf. also 33 ff.
- * On New Year's rituals, cf. Der Mythos der ewigen Wiederkehr, 83 ff.
- * Cf. the literary references in: Eliade: Der Mythos der ewigen Wiederkehr, 117 ff.; idem: Die Religionen und das Heilige, 463 ff.
- * J. F. Rock: The Na-khi Nâga Cult and Related Ceremonies, Rome 1952, vol. I, pp. 279 ff.
- * Campbell Thomson: Assyrian Medical Texts, London 1923, p. 59. Cf. also Eliade: Kosmogonische Mythen und magische Heilungen, in: Paideuma, 1956.
- * F. J. Gillen: The Native Tribes of Central Australia, 2nd ed., London 1938, 1970. ff.
- * See Raymond Firth: The Work of the Gods in Tikopia, I. London 1940.
- * F. E. Williams, quoted by Lucien Lévy-Bruhl: La mythologie primitive, Paris 1935, pp. 162, 163-164.
- * J. P. Harrington, quoted by Lévy-Bruhl, id. mG, p. 165. 92
- * Ad. E. Jensen: Das religiöse Weltbild einer frühen Kultur, Stuttgart 1948. The word dema comes from the Marind-Andimok people of New Guinea.
- * E. Volhardt: Kannibalismus, Stuttgart 1939. Cf. Eliade: Le Mythe du Bon Sauvage ou les prestiges du l'Origine, in: La Nouvelle NRF, August 1955.
- * Cf. Der Mythos der ewigen Wiederkehr, 165 ff.; see also Eliade: Images et Symboles. Paris 1952. 80 ff.
- * This transcendence is achieved through the "fortunate moment" (kshana), a kind of sacred time that makes it possible to "step out of time"; Images et Symboles, 10 ff.
- * Henri-Charles Puech: La Gnose et le Temps, Erano Jahrbuch XX., 1951. 60 ff.
- * Der Mythos der ewigen Wiederkehr, 149 ff.; on the evaluation of history in Judaism, especially by the prophets.
- * Cf. Eliade: Images et Symboles, 222 ff.
- * On the difficulties of historicism, see Der Mythos der ewigen Wiederkehr, 210 ff.
- * Examples and literature in: Eliade: Die Religionen und das Heilige, pp. 61–97.
- * See Die Religionen und das Heilige, pp. 88 ff.; 109 ff.

* On the element, cf. *Die Religionen und das Heilige*, pp. 61-146. Above all, however, R. Pettazzoni; *Dia*, Rome 1921; *Ibid.*: *L'onniscienza di Dio*, Turin 1955; Wilhelm Schmidt: *Ursprung der Gottesidee*, I-XII. Münster 1926-1955.

* Martin Gusinde: *Das höchste Wesen bei den Selk'nam auf Feuerland*, Festschrift W. Schmidt. Vienna 1928. pp. 269-274.

** Cf. Frazer: *The Worship of Nature*, L, London 1926. pp. 150 ff.

*** *Ibid.* p. 185.

* J. Spieth: *Die Religion der Eweer*, Göttingen-Leipzig 1911, 46 ff.

** Mgr. Le Roy: *La religion des primitifs*, 7th ed. Paris 1925, p. 184.

*** J. Trilles: *Les Pygmées de la Forêt équatoriale*, Paris 1932, p. 74.

**** *Ibid.* p. 77.

* Frazer, *id. work*, p. 631.

* For the following, see *Die Religionen und das Heilige*, pp. 217 ff.; *Images et Symboles*, 199 ff.

* On this system of symbols, cf. *Die Religionen und das Heilige*, pp. 494 ff., especially pp. 508 ff.

* See J. Daniélou: *Bible et Liturgie*, commentary and text. Paris 1951, pp. 58 ff.

* J. Daniélou: *Sacramentum futuri*, Paris 1950, p. 65. and the text. Paris 1951, pp. 58 ff.

** J. Daniélou: *Bible et Liturgie*, 61, p. 55.

* See also J. Daniélou's texts in: *Bible et Liturgie*, 56 ff. 126

* On mythical-ritual motifs, see *Die Religionen und das Heilige*, pp. 239 ff., 323 ff.

* Cf. L. Beirnaert: *La dimension mythique dans le sacramentalisme chrétien*, *Eranos-Jahrbuch* XVII, 1949, p. 275.

* James Mooney: *The Ghost-Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890*, *Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology* XIV, 2, Washington 1896, 641-1136, p. 721.

* Cf. Eliade: *La Tene-Mere et les hiérogamies cosmiques*, *Eranos-Jahrbuch* XII, 1954, 57-95, 59 ff.

** S. A. Dieterich: *Mutter Erde* 3rd ed., Leipzig-Berlin 1925; B. Nyberg: *Kind und Erde*, Helsinki 1931; cf. Eliade: *Die Religionen und das Heilige*, 271 ff.

* Cf. the references in: Eliade: *La Tene-Mere et les hiérogamies cosmiques*, p. 69, note 15.

- * Marcel Granet: *Le dépôt de l'enfant sur le sol*, *Rewe Archéologique* 1922 = *Études sociologiques sur la Chine*, Paris 1953, pp. 159-202, 192 ff.; 197 ff.
- * A. Dieterich: *Mutter Erde*, pp. 28 ff.; B. Nyberg: *Kind und Erde*, p. 150.
- * J. J. Bachofen: *Das Muttenecht*. Basel 1861. 3rd edition 1948; Wilhelm Schmidt: *Das Muttenecht*, Vienna 1955.
- * Cf. *Die Religionen und das Heilige*, 273 ff. It should be noted, however, that although the myth of cosmic hierogamy is widespread, it is not universal, and there is no evidence of it in the most ancient cultures (Australia, indigenous peoples, polar peoples, etc.).
- * Cf. *Die Religionen und das Heilige*, 417 ff.
- * Cf. *Die Religionen und das Heilige*, 310 ff.; G. Widengren: *The King and the Tree of Life in Ancient Near Eastern Religion*, Uppsala 1951.
- * A. G. Hoadricourt and L. Hédin: *L'homme et les plantes cultivées*, Paris 1946. 90, o.
- ** Cf. *Die Religionen und das Heilige*, 364 ff. 142
- * For the following, cf. Rolf Stein: *Jardins en miniature d'Extrême Orient*, *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême Orient*, 42, 1943, 26 ff. and elsewhere.
- * On the sanctity of stones, cf. *Die Religionen und das Heilige*, pp. 247-270.
- * Cf. *idem*, pp. 190-216.
- * Cf. *ibid.* pp. 147-179. See also Franz Altheim: *Die unbesiegbare Gottheit*, Hamburg 1957.
- * *Le mendiant ingrat II*, p. 196.
- * This conclusion is reached, for example, by Leopold Schmidt in his study. See *Gestalttheiligkeit im bäuerlichen Arbeitsmythos*, Vienna 1952.
- * See Ralph Piddington: *Karadjeri Initiation*, *Oceania* III, 1932-1933, pp. 46-87.
- * Cf. Marcel Griaule: *Dieu d'Eau. Entretiens avec Ogotemeli*, Paris 1948.
- * Cf. Werner Müller: *Die blaue Hütte*, Wiesbaden 1954. pp. 115 ff.
- * See the relevant texts in: Eliade: *Le Yoga. Immortalité et Liberté*, Paris 1954. pp. 264, 395.
- * Cf. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy: *Symbolism of the Done*, *Indian Historical Quarterly*, XIV. 1938, 1-56, 34 ff.
- ** M. Eliade: *Le Yoga*, p. 400, see also K. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, p. 53, note 60.
- * One part of the sacred space, which corresponds to the central pillar in certain Eurasian house types, consequently plays the role of the "centre of the world". S. G. Ränk: *Die heilige Hinterecke im Hauskult der Völker Nordosteuropas und Nordasiens*, Helsinki 1949.
- ** Cf. Eliade: *Le Vol mystique*, *Numen* III, 1956, pp. 1-13.

- * Suttavibhanga: Pârâjika, I, I, 4, commented on by Paul Mus in: La notion de temps réversible dans la mythologie bouddhique, Melun 1939. p. 13.
 - * C. Hentze: Bronzegerät, Kultbauten, Religion im ältesten China der Chang-Zeit, Antwerp 1951, pp. 49 ff.; idem: Sinologica III, 1953, pp. 229-239 and figs. 2-3.
 - ** C. Hentze: Tod, Auferstehung, Weltordnung. Das mythische Bild im ältesten China, Zurich 1955, pp. 47 ff. and figs. 24-25.
 - * Cf. M. Eliade: Le Chamanisme et les techniques archaïques de l'extase, Paris 1951, 357 ff.
 - * Cf. Le Chamanisme..., 419 ff.; Maarti Haavio: Väinämöinen, Eternal Sage, Helsinki 1952, 112 ff.
 - * Cf. Die Religionen und das Heilige, 430 ff.
 - ** Cf. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy: The Pilgrim's Way, Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Oriental Research Society XXIII, 1937, Part IV, pp. 1-20.
 - * Cf. Arnold van Gennep: Les rites de passage, Paris 1909.
 - * On the problem of initiation and initiation rites, cf. Ruth Benedict: Urformen der Kultur, especially pp. 56 ff., 74, 82 ff., 91 ff., 139 ff., 161 ff.
 - * For the following, see M. Eliade: Mystere et régénération spirituelle dans les religions extra-européennes, Eranos Jahrbuch XXIII, 1955, pp. 57-98.
 - * R. Thurnwald: Primitive Initiations- und Wiedergeburtssitten, Eranos-Jahrbuch VII, 1950, pp. 321-398, 393.
 - * M. Canney: The Skin of Rebirth, Man, July 1939, no. 91, pp. 104-105.
 - * Cf. H. Schurtz: Alterklassen und Männerbünde, Berlin 1902; O. Höfler: Kultische Geheimbünde der Germanen I. Frankfurt a. M. 1934; R. Wolfram: Schwerttanz und Männerbund I-III. Kassel 1936; W.-E. Peuckert: Geheimkulte, Heidelberg 1951.
 - ** E. Andersson: Contribution to the Ethnography of the Kuta L, Uppsala 1953, 264 ff.
 - * Cf. R. Wolfram: Weiberbünde, Zeitschrift für Volkskunde 42, 1933, 143 ff.
 - * Cf. M. Eliade: Le Chamanisme. . ., 36 ff.
 - * Cf. Sylvan Lévi: La doctrine du sacrifice dans les Brâhmanas, Paris 1898, 104 ff.; H. Lommel: Wiedergeburt aus embryonalem Zustand in der Symbolik des altindischen Rituals, in: C. Hentze: Tod, Auferstehung, Weltordnung, 107-130.
 - ** For the cosmological symbolism of closed fists, see C. Hentze, op. cit., 96 ff. and elsewhere.
 - * Majjhima-Nikâya II, 17; cf. also M. Eliade: Le Yoga, pp. 172 ff.
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[i] Rudolf Otto (1869-1914) - German theologian. He sought to gain scientific knowledge of the essence and forms of expression of religion. In his opinion, this knowledge is made possible by the "awe" felt before God, a feeling that objectifies the intimacy revealed in the divine essence. In his magnum opus, *Das Heilige* (The Sacred), published posthumously in 1917, he uses the concept of the numinous to express the irrational content of religion, which, with its "fascinating mystery" (*mysterium fasciñans*), keeps man in awe (*mysterium tremendum*).

[ii] The subject of philosophical anthropology, phenomenology and psychology – in this regard, Eliade relies primarily on the anthropological research of Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, and within that, on the findings presented in the following volumes: *Le surnaturel et la nature dans la mentalité primitive*, Paris 1931; *La mythologie primitive*, Paris 1935; *L'expérience mythique et les symboles chez les primitifs*, Paris 1938.

When developing his philosophical terminology, he drew inspiration from the works of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. Thus, Eliade's interpretation of the category of being-in-the-world was first formulated in Heidegger's epoch-making work *Sein und Zeit* (Being and Time).

[iii] Kwakiutl tribe (quakiutl, koskime) - a North American Indian tribe. Its members populated the north-eastern region of Vancouver Island. For more details, see: Franz. Boas: *Contributions to the Ethnology of the Kwakiutl*, New York 1925.

[iv] Edward Burnett Tylor (1832-1917) - English ethnologist, founder of the doctrine of animism. According to this doctrine, all religious concepts can be traced back to the popular belief that not only living organisms but also objects have souls. Tylor believed that primitive peoples identified the soul with breath, blood, etc., and therefore endowed beings with multiple souls. For more details, see Tylor: *Primitive Culture*, London 1873.

James George Frazer (1854-1941) - English ethnologist and classical philologist, researcher of religious history. His work *The Golden Bough* (London 1890; *Az aranyág*, Budapest 1965) is very well known.

[v] Cultural ethnology – a science specialising in the study of the cultural behaviour and customs of peoples and ethnic groups.

[vi] Marabout - originally the name given to a priest of a North African Muslim sect; later it became a general ecclesiastical term applied to dervishes.

[vii] Vedic - a partly ritualistic, partly folk-philosophical, folkloristic approach expounded in the Vedas. The Vedas are the oldest works of ancient Sanskrit literature, dating from the 2nd and 1st millennia BC

They consist of four main books: the Rig Veda (book of hymns), the Sama Veda (book of melodies), the Yajur Veda (book of sacrificial formulas), and the Atharva Veda (the book of rituals of the fire priest). These are accompanied by commentaries such as the Brāhmanas (theological explanations), the Āranyakas (general reflections), the Sūtras (textbooks), and the Upanishads (philosophical treatises), which are the most important from the point of view of the topics discussed by Eliade.

[viii] Landnáma - a. m. the acquisition of land, conquest. The history of the conquest of Iceland in the 9th and 10th centuries. The related written records, the Landnabok (books of conquest), were compiled by several authors in the 13th century.

[ix] Achilpák - the Arunta or Aranda, a tribe of the Aranda people of Central Australia with a typically Stone Age culture.

[x] Irminsul (or Irmin, Irmimo, Ermin) - according to Tacitus, the ancestor of one of the Germanic tribes, the Hermiones, son of Mannus.

[xi] Rudolf of Fulda – Among the written records from 9th-century Germany, the Annals of Fulda are considered the most significant in terms of both volume and source value. They were written in the Benedictine monastery of the city from the early 800s for nearly a century. Rudolf of Fulda kept the records between 839 and 863, which historians unanimously agree are reliable enough to be considered official documents. Rudolf of Fulda kept the records between 839 and 863, which historians unanimously agree can be considered official documents due to their reliability.

[xii] Flores Island - an island belonging to Indonesia, with an indigenous population with a Stone Age culture.

[xiii] Zoroaster (630-553 BC) - Persian religious founder. He was active in Bactria, but was eventually exiled from there for his opposition to the Mithraic cult, which involved human sacrifice. The hymns and meditations attributed to him have been preserved in the Avesta, the holy book of the Persians.

[xiv] Ziggurat (ziququrat) - a tall structure, the cult centre of larger Mesopotamian cities. A tower consisting of rectangular blocks, tapering upwards in steps, with a room at the top housing a statue of a deity. The most famous ziggurat is the Babylonian ziggurat, built at the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC, and the myth of the Tower of Babel is based on its reconstruction in the 6th century BC.

[xv] Yoma - a mountain range bordering the Iravadi Valley in western India on two sides; the western range is called Arakan-Yoma, and the eastern range is called Pegu-Yoma.

[xvi] Marduk (in Hebrew: Merodach) - originally the god of the city of Babylon, then made the imperial god by Hammurabi. Iliāmat - the primordial mother goddess of Babylonian mythology. She symbolises the salty waters of the sea, which give rise to life. After a bitter struggle, Marduk defeated her, splitting her body in two, from one half of which he created the sky, and from the other half, the earth.

[xvii] Le Corbusier (original name: Charles Édouard Jeanneret; 1887-1965) was a Swiss architect, painter and writer. His name is associated with the most modern architectural endeavours.

[xviii] Hamitic and Hamitoid pastoral peoples - a name derived from the biblical name Ham. In anthropological terms, this refers to the Europid peoples of North and North-East Africa, with the exception of the Semitic peoples. In a broader sense, it refers to the peoples and tribes who speak Hamitic languages (= Hamitoid).

[xix] The Ballad of the Arta Bridge - Arta, a Greek city, the former seat of the Greek metropolitan bishop. Its medieval buildings served religious and administrative purposes and were associated with a wide range of legends, including the ballad quoted above. Ballad of the Arges Monastery - a work similar in theme to the ballad of Kőmíves Kelemen from Transylvania. For more details, see: Oszkár Majland: The Legend of the Arges Monastery and its variation in Hunyad County, Déva 1885.

[xx] Gudea - Babylonian prince who lived in the 2nd millennium BC. His name has been preserved in the most ancient Sumerian writings.

[xxi] Sennacherib (705-681 BC) - Assyrian king, conqueror of Babylon. He built Nineveh and made it a city of world historical significance. He was murdered by his sons.

[xxii] Cosmas Indicopleustes (meaning: Cosmas of India) was a Greek geographer from Alexandria in the 6th century BC. As a merchant and traveller, he travelled throughout East Africa, India and Ceylon. He later became a monk and, as such, sought to prove the geographical and historical superiority of the biblical worldview over the Ptolemaic worldview.

[xxiii] Yokuts - Native American people living at the foot of the Sierra Nevada. The Yokuts were once the most populous ethnic community in California. Until recently, they formed a confederation of about forty tribes, but today their membership numbers barely reach six hundred.

[xxiv] Yuki - a North American Indian people; they originally populated what is now Tennessee and northern Georgia, but later reservations were established for them in Oklahoma. Their population today is barely 1,000.

[xxv] Algonquins - an Indian tribe living in the northern part of the Great Lakes.

[xxvi] Sioux – a very significant North American Indian people. Their main tribes are the Dakota, Assiniboine, Assaroka, Winnebago, Mandan and Omaha. Today, around forty thousand of their descendants live in Canada and the USA.

[xxvii] Dakota - Sioux tribe; see note 26.

[xxviii] Akîtu ceremony – the procession to the "akîtu house", the climax of the Babylonian ritual festivals.

[xxix] Hittites - collective name for Indo-European-speaking peoples living in central and eastern Asia Minor between the 2nd and 1st millennia BC.

[xxx] Albiruni (full name: El-Usztd Abul Reihan Mohanimed Ben Ahmed Zein ad-Din el-biruni) - Arab historian and astronomer, died around 1039. He travelled throughout India, became acquainted with the local culture, primarily Indian philosophy and natural sciences. He wrote about Indian place values and is also known for his geographical location determinations. His main work is Canon el Musadi seu Tractatus geographico-astronomicus.

[xxxi] Hubert and Mauss - M. Mauss et H. Hubert: *Mélanges d'histoire des religions*, Paris 1909.

[xxxii] Netsilik Eskimos - An Eskimo tribe living in Alaska; direct descendants of the Native Americans.

[xxxiii] Uitoto cannibals - a South American Indian tribe speaking a dialect belonging to the Tupu language family. Its members wear distinctive ear ornaments, which is where the tribe got its nickname, Orejones (big ears).

[xxxiv] Destruction of Samaria - After the death of Solomon (c. 970-931 BC), the kingdom fell apart and Israel was formed from an alliance of ten northern tribes of the former empire. Samaria was its capital, which was conquered by Sargon II (721-705 BC) and made an Assyrian province. See 2 Kings 17:26-41. Hegel is linked to Judeo-Christian ideology - Eliade refers here to the European conception of history, which is rooted in the Old and New Testaments' conception of time.

[xxxv] Hegel is linked to Judeo-Christian ideology - Eliade refers here to the European conception of history, which is rooted in the Old and New Testament conception of time. In the Old Testament, time can only be interpreted in terms of revelation, through which God, as a being who moves freely in this dimension, manifests himself as the creator of history. The New Testament's conception of time is characterised by linearity, which

is able to empirically follow the logical sequence of connections. In Hegel's philosophy, the creative power of history – in the form of the world spirit – encompasses both Old Testament revelation and the logical determinism of causal connections that preserve New Testament motivations.

[xxxvi] The concepts of time in historicism and existentialist philosophies – both philosophical approaches aimed to capture the fundamental experiences of our century; both are inspired by the "eternal return" of identical existential situations and the acknowledgement of the original tragedy, which, in terms of its timing, essentially considers the existential and historical possibilities of the human race to be always the same - and not "expanding".

[xxxvii] Naturism - A concept introduced by French religious scholar Albert Réville (1825-1906), which refers to a psychological and religious historical trend that is opposed to animism (see note 4) to denote a psychological and religious-historical trend that considers the cult of natural phenomena to be the primitive form of religion. For more details, see: Réville: *Les religions des peuples non-civilisés*, Paris 1883.

[xxxviii] Nature religion - this is what the cult practices of ancient peoples are called today. Initially, only fetishism (idol worship) was considered a nature religion, but then ethnologists in this century included animism (the doctrine of spirits animating the universe), manism (cultic worship of ancestors), shamanism (cultic practices involving contact with spirits) and totemism (cultic association of the human, animal and plant worlds).

[xxxix] Maori - A Polynesian tribe living in northern New Zealand, with a population of about 100,000.

[xl] Akposso Negroes - A small tribe living in central Togo.

[xli] Selknam - An indigenous tribe of Tierra del Fuego; its members are often referred to as Ona. They are typically tall and engage in hunting. Their language is related to that of the Patagonian Indians.

[xlii] Andamanese – an indigenous tribe numbering only a few hundred people, inhabitants of the Andaman Islands not far from the coast of Burma. For more information on their culture, see: A. Radcliff-R. Brown: *The Andaman Islands*, Cambridge 1933.

[xliii] Yoruba – a people living in Nigeria and Dahomey, numbering nearly three and a half million, belonging anthropologically to the Sudanese Negroes, who once had a highly organised culture. Their empire existed between the 11th and 18th centuries, with a centralised, dual power structure (divine kingship and secular supremacy). For more information, see: S. Johnson: *The History of the Yoruba*, London 1921.

[xliv] Samoyeds - a collective name for peoples speaking Samoyedic languages belonging to the Uralic language family. They include the Nenets, Nganasans, Selkups and Enets, who number about 50,000 in total and live scattered across Northern Europe and Northern Asia.

[xlv] Koryaks – an indigenous people living in the northern part of the Kamchatka Peninsula; their population does not exceed ten thousand. For more details, see: W. Jochelson: *The Koryak*, I-II. Leiden 1908.

[xlvi] Ainu – an indigenous people of East Asia, whose members live on Sakhalin Island and the Kuril Islands. They have retained a distinctly European appearance in their Mongolian environment, which makes this ethnic group extremely important from an anthropological point of view.

[xlvii] Kulins - one of the oldest Australian indigenous tribes living in the state of Victoria, speaking a language related to Kurnai.

[xlvi] Hereros – a tribe belonging to the Bantu Negroes of Central and South-West Africa; they number about forty thousand. From an anthropological and cultural point of view, they show kinship with the East Hamitic peoples (cf. note 18). See also: J. Irle: *Die Hereros*, Berlin 1906. 216

[xlix] Tumbukas – a Central African tribe with a late Stone Age culture.

[I] Chii language - a West African indigenous language spoken by many people, sometimes also referred to as Tvi. It is most common in Sudan, but is also used as a lingua franca in Togo and the successor states of the former Gold Coast.

[II] Ewe - from an anthropological point of view, a West African tribe belonging to the Sudanese Negroes, mainly populating Togo and Dahomey. It has a population of nearly two hundred thousand.

[lii] Gyiama – a small Negro tribe living at the foot of Kilimanjaro.

[liii] Bantu – the largest group of African Negroes, with a total population of seventy million. The Bantu Negroes populate the central and southern parts of the continent and include the following peoples and tribes: the Zulus, Kosas, Fenges, Sutkos, Tauks, Hereros, Kaffirs and Pangwes. The Bantu form a single language family, which includes about 170 languages and dialects.

[liv] Negrillek - an extremely small tribe of pygmies in Central Africa.

[lv] Fang peoples - a collective name for the peoples inhabiting Gabon and the Congo Basin. Their language belongs to the Bantu language family.

[lvi] Oraons - an Indian people speaking a Dravidian language, numbering around one million. The religion of the Oraons is linked to a single sun god, to whom nine classes of gods and spirits are subordinate. During ceremonies, animal sacrifices are offered, continuing the tradition of earlier human sacrifices. For more information, see: S. Ch. Roy: *The Oraons of Chota Nagpur*, Karachi 1915.

[lvii] Tertullian Quintus Septimius Florens (c. 150-225 AD) - Alongside Minucius Felix, he is considered one of the earliest ecclesiastical writers. Around 200 AD, he broke with his church and joined a sect known as the Montanists. His strict moral principles and dogmatically based conceptual definitions were considered peculiar and eccentric in his time, but they enriched theological thinking in the centuries that followed with such fundamental categories as divine nature, grace, pastoral ministry, etc.

[lviii] Johannes Chrysostomus (354-407 AD) – i.e. St. John Chrysostom. Patriarch of Constantinople from 398, one of the most distinguished Church Fathers. His homilies explaining the Old and New Testaments and his two hundred letters are well known. The most comprehensive description of his work: Chr. Baur: *Der heilige Johannes Chrysostomus*, I-II. Berlin 1929-1930.

[lix] Cyril (c. 315-386) - Bishop of Jerusalem, Greek Church Father. His literary works include twenty-three catecheses, a letter to Emperor Constantine, and a homily. His polemic against Emperor Julian is a significant monument in the history of ideas (cf. note 66).

[Ix] Justinus, Saint (c. 105-166 AD) - initially a follower of Neoplatonic philosophy, then a proponent of Christianity and a defender of Late writings - attacking the

Gnostics and defending the Neoplatonic-Christian doctrine of the Logos, he contributed significantly to the development of the metaphysical unity of Christian religious philosophy.

[Ixi] Theophilus of Antioch – the most significant Christian apologist of the 2nd century. Around 168, he became bishop of Antioch. We know nothing about his life, and we only have indirect information about his works (Eusebius, Jerome).

[Ixii] Clement of Rome (Clemens Romanus) – one of the Apostolic Fathers. Of his letters, only the one written to the Corinthian community in 96 AD is considered authentic. The rest are apocryphal from the 2nd century.

[Ixiii] Egyptian demotic texts – texts written in demotic script. This is a popular Egyptian script that developed from hieratic script through abbreviations and letter combinations. It is considered a hieroglyphic script and originated during the Ethiopian rule of Egypt (7th century BC).

[Ixiv] Taoist immortals - a cultural and then religious movement that emerged from the philosophical work of Lao Tzu (c. 565 BC) in Taoism. In contrast to Confucianism, which follows universal social principles, Taoism emphasises the value of individual existence. The priests of the sect (Tao-ce) are "immortals".

[Ixv] Macrobius Theodosius - Latin writer; around 400 AD, he wrote the seven books of Saturnalia. His late commentaries on Cicero are imbued with the spirit of Neoplatonism.

[Ixvi] Flavius Claudius Julianus (331-363 AD) - a learned Roman emperor who was called an Apostate because he abandoned the Christian faith. Two satirical writings, seventy-nine letters and five epigrams have survived from his writings, all in Greek. Only a few quotations are known from his treatise against the Christian faith, which have been preserved for posterity through the counter-treatise of Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem (cf. note 59).

[Ixvii] Proclus Diodotus (411-485 AD) - a philosopher who gave Neoplatonism its classical form. He is considered a follower of Plotinus, but he reinterprets him both ontologically (the trinity of being-existence-conceivability as a metaphysical unity precedes divine universality) and gnostically (allegorical and symbolic "interpretation of the world"). He imbues the primordial principle with idealistic content.

[Ixviii] Léon Bloy (1846-1917) - French writer and journalist. His journalism is characterised by a strong social conscience. As a devout Catholic, his novels often touch on apocalyptic themes, seeking to show a way out of the godless and unjust present (Au seuil de l'Apocalypse, Paris 1916). His complete works were published in twenty volumes between 1947 and 1948.

[Ixix] Neolithic ploughmen - Eliade is referring here to the so-called New Stone Age people who populated Europe between the 5th and 2nd millennia BC. The ploughing lifestyle certainly played a major role in the fact that the people and groups of people of that era sought permanent settlements for themselves, which created opportunities for organised farming and tool making.

[Ixx] Karadjerik - A small indigenous people native to northeastern Australia.

[Ixxi] Dogon – a relatively large African people numbering around two million, inhabiting the region between Senegal and Nigeria; their culture is strongly influenced by the Mandinka and Fulani.

[lxxii] Omaha – an Indian tribe now living in small numbers in the state of Nebraska in North America, a branch of the Dakota Indians (see notes 26 and 27).

[lxxiii] Tantrism - the religious doctrine of the so-called Tantra sect, which broke away from Brahmanism around 500 AD. It considers Shiva and his wife, Parvati, to be its main deities.

[lxxiv] Lancelot - a reference to Lancelot de Lac, the hero of British Breton legends, who, as punishment for his sinful love for Queen Geniève, the wife of King Arthur, was unable to find the Holy Grail, even at the cost of inhuman suffering. The literary adaptation of the ballad is one of the best-known Old French works: Chrétien de Troyes: *Lancelot ou le Chevalier à la Charrette*.

[lxxv] Telos (????) - original meaning: goal, end, limit. In a figurative sense, it means completeness, fulfilment, and in some texts it was also used to denote the ultimate cause of religious idealism.

[lxxvi] Mandja and Banda African tribes - two small Negro tribes living in the Upper Nile region.

[lxxvii] Maenads (ματ????) - i.e. "frenzied women"; according to legend, the nurses and companions of Dionysus.

[lxxviii] 78. Amnion. . . chorion (?μ????) - the amnion originally referred to the sacrificial cloth used to cover the sacrificial animal, as well as the vessel used to collect the animal's blood. Chorion means skin, strap, raw hide.

[lxxix] Croce and Ortega y Gasset - Benedetto Croce (1866-1952), Italian philosopher and aesthetician. His theoretical work was based on a careful distinction between the theoretical and volitional elements of history, and on the recognition that only the opposition between these two historical spheres can ensure the reality of values. José Ortega y Gasset (1883-1955), Spanish philosopher. Based on Heidegger's fundamental ontology, he examined the ontological structure and constructional components of historical reality. Facts - including historical facts - focused his scope on the individual, in whose volitional capacity he believed he recognised "radical reality".

Biography

Mircea Eliade (1907-1986)

Mircea Eliade regarded religion, this symbolic practice of existence, as a mediating element between different cultures. Thus, his research focused primarily on linguistic expressions and behavioural situations that preserve or promise the memory of a former or future cultural unity.

For him, religion reveals the essence of humanity, which is anthropologically inherent in all mortals and which, in the unifying appeal of belief in God, is capable of eliminating the inequalities of cultural levels in perspective. Eliade understands culture as the psychological presence of the individual in the universe, and in this respect he also considers the individual to be the repository of an existential unity that was once lost but can be regained through the belief in an "eternal return".

While his research into the history of religion seeks to recreate the mythical tradition of the unity of being, his works of fiction deal more with the disruptive influences of the outside world. Long since torn from Eastern Europe, the Romanian-born scholar still vividly preserves in his instincts the unique and contradictory dimensions of his former homeland. His novels and short stories combine the dissonance of these dimensions with the lost harmonies of his mother tongue.

Mircea Eliade was born in 1907. He studied philosophy, history and ethnography at the universities of Bucharest and Calcutta. He returned to Romania for a short time as a university lecturer, then served as a diplomat in London and Lisbon on behalf of the Antonescu regime. After the war, he taught at the Sorbonne and served as president of the Romanian Cultural Centre in Paris. From 1956, he took up a university chair in Chicago, across the ocean. Eliade died in the United States in 1986.

Major works

(Novels)

Isabel și apele diavolului (Isabel and the Waters of the Devil), 1930. Maitreyi, 1933.

Întoarcerea din rai (Return from Paradise), 1934.

Domnișoara Cristea (Miss Cristea), 1936.

Șarpele (The Snake), 1938.

Nuntă cer (Heavenly Wedding), 1939.

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1940. Forêt interdite (Forbidden Forest), 1955.

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(Collections of essays)

Traité d'histoire des religions (Treatise on the History of Religions), 1949. Le

mythe de l'éternel retour (The Myth of the Eternal Return), 1949.

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