



UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ



Fondul Social European
POSDRU 2007-2013



Instrumente Structurale
2007-2013



MINISTERUL
EDUCAȚIEI ȘI
CERCETĂRII
ȘTIINȚIFICE

OIPOSDRU



ACADEMIA ROMÂNĂ

The religious conscience and the modern secular culture in Mircea Eliade's Views

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This paper is supported by the Sectorial Operational Programme Human Resources Development (SOP HRD), financed from the European Social Fund and by the Romanian Government under the contract number SOP HRD/159/1.5/S/136077.

București, 2015

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SUMMARY

In the scientific research " Conștiința religioasă și cultura modernă profană la Mircea Eliade," the main purpose that I am following is to point out the relation of the religious man and modern secular man from the perspective of M. Eliade. Using an analytical method, we examine how M. Eliade relates the life of modern man to the religious man whose life has meaning only if he lives in the sacred world. In Eliade's writings sacred is contrasted with the profane and the religious man is placed almost always in opposition to modern secular man. To understand the sacred it is necessary to see how it manifests in the profane world. Also, to understand the modern man's identity is necessary to see how Eliade defines the identity of religious man and what is, its connection with modern man.

In the first part of this research we will analyze the idea of religion which means the experience of the sacred in the eliadian thinking. For Eliade, religion is basically the experience of the sacred related to the ideas of being and truth. M. Eliade followed and developed the idea of Rudolf Otto about sacred, showing the importance of the sacred experience for religious life. The sacred has a universal dimension and plays a significant role in the history of humanity because the beginnings of culture are rooted in religious experiences.

M. Eliade points out that, the sacred always manifests itself as a reality of a wholly different order from natural realities. The basic definition of the sacred is that it is the opposite of the profane, its act of manifestation being designated by the term hierophany. Thus, according to Eliade, there are two modes of being in the world: the sacred and the profane. In defining the phenomenology of religion, M. Eliade points out the irreducibility of the sacred. He argue that religious phenomena must be understood as uniquely and irreducibly religious. The religious can be distinguished from the secular because it expresses a universal structure that Eliade called the dialectic of the sacred and the profane. This dialectic involves the experience of the transcendent in which the sacred paradoxically manifests itself through generally profane phenomena.

In his scientific writings, M. Eliade emphasizes repeatedly the antithetic relationship of religious man and non-religious modern man. The religious man attempts to remain as long as possible in a sacred universe. He has a different experience of life in comparison with the experience of the man without religious feelings, of the man who lives in a desacralized world. Thus, for the *homo religiosus* life has a transcendent quality. The nature entirely is always filled with a religious significance. The aspiration of *homo religiosus* for the sacred experience allowed him to immerse into the sacred by learning to understand the meaning of hierophanies. Thus, the religious man participates into the experience of the truth that was once at the origin of

those hierophanies. The profan man, on the other hand, is the man who lives only in the history, in a linear time. His life is always related to human experience in which no divine presence can be inserted. M. Eliade expresses his viewpoint on *homo religiosus* sometimes in parallel, sometimes in opposition with the modern, non-religious man. Religious man differs from modern man not only in his general way of thinking but also in his religious attitudes. For religious man there is no activity, which is merely profane because his great desire is to live in a sacred world.

In the second part of our research, I intend to show the perspective of M. Eliade about the function of the religious symbolism. Eliade's approach is grounded in his claim that there are universal and coherent symbolic systems that provide the framework for interpreting religious meaning. The religious phenomenon, in most cases, cannot be expressed without symbolic language. According to M. Eliade, the symbol has a central place in the manifestation of religious life. The mythic sacred speaks or reveals itself through symbols. Symbolism ought to be looked upon as a specifically human characteristic, which is used especially in religious phenomenon. M. Eliade describes the nature and function of the religious symbolism as necessary for religious phenomenology. The symbol is experienced as a „cipher” that points beyond itself and reveals hidden levels of reality.

Religious symbolism is multivalent; because of this polyvalence, religious symbols can integrate diverse meanings into a whole or a system, and because of this capacity of unification, religious symbols can express paradoxical and contradictory aspects of reality otherwise inexpressible. M. Eliade claims that religious symbolism always has an existential value; a symbol always aims at a reality in which human existence is engaged. As extensions of hierophanies, religious symbols are put in place by *homo symbolicus* to prolong the sacred manifestations. M. Eliade emphasizes that the sacred is always manifested in historical contexts. History cannot basically modify the structure of archaic symbolism; it constantly adds new meanings, but they do not destroy the structure of the symbol. Modern man will obtain a new existential dimension when he accepts and realizes the value of the religious symbolism in his life.