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XXVI

MYTH, TITUAL AND MYSTICISM

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Professor Ithamar Gruenwald

Editors

Gideon Bohak, Ron Margolin, Ishay Rosen-Zvi



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Mircea Eliade: Androgyne, Totality, and Reintegration

Moshe Idel

1. The Androgyne in Eliade's *Academica*: A Tentative Inventory

In many of his writings about religion since 1938, Mircea Eliade discussed various androgyne myths, a theme that to him encapsulates some of the most important ideals of archaic religions. Eliade's work on this theme reiterates discussions of theosophists or occultists in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which were influential on some figures in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with whose writings he was acquainted.¹ Central to his vision of religion, this theme has been discussed by scholars in the field,² and has reverberated significantly in the work of other scholars.³

- 1 See the discussions of the topic of the androgyne and Western esotericism in Antoine Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism* (SUNY Press, Albany, 1994), passim, especially pp. 201-226, and for one of the major sources of the concept of the androgyne in Western esotericism see Andrew Weeks, *Boehme: An Intellectual Biography of the Seventeenth-Century Philosopher and Mystic* (SUNY Press, Albany, 1991), pp. 114-121, and Pierre Degaye, "L'homme virginal selon Jakob Boehme," *L'androgyne*, pp. 155-195. See also below note 38.
- 2 See Steven M. Wasserstrom, *Religion after Religion, Gershom Scholem, Mircea Eliade and Henry Corbin at Eranos*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1999), pp. 203-214.
- 3 See, e.g., *L'Androgyne*, (Albin Michel, Paris, 1986), Elemire Zolla, *The Androgyne, Reconciliation of Male and Female* (Crossroad, New York, 1981), Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *Women, Androgynes, and Other Mythical Beasts* (Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1982), pp. 290-291, 296-297, 314, or more recently Marcel Tolcea, *Ezoterism si comunicare simbolica* (Editura Universitatii Timisoara de Vest, Timisoara, 2004), pp. 150-151, Elliot R. Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being, Kabbalistic Hermeneutics and Poetic Imagination* (Fordham University Press, New York, 2005), pp. 261-262, and for the impact on Henry Corbin, see Wasserstrom, *ibidem*, p. 209. See also below, note 38.

Below, I shall try to articulate Eliade's understanding of the androgyne as an archetype, taking into consideration both the difference between Eliade's early and late work on the subject, and an analysis of some of the sources he interpreted. I claim that in early discussions of the theme Eliade was influenced by some Kabbalistic themes, which were later purged from his work, for reasons we shall suggest below. In this paper I employ Eliade's own approach (used by other scholars as well) and take into consideration the three major genres in which he wrote: the academic, the literary and the biographical.⁴ I will begin by mapping the major stages of his academic discussions of this theme, and then turn to the pertinent literary expressions and end with some salient biographical data. I will attempt to exhaust the first and last short discussions [A] and [F] immediately below, while the longer essays in Romanian, the variants [B] and [C], and the French [D], and the French/English [E], will be discussed in the following two sections.

A] Eliade published "Allegory or 'Secret Language'," a short essay in Romanian, in March 1938, the first part of which discusses the mystical nature of *Song of Songs* (an earlier version of this essay exists, but it is less relevant to our discussion).⁵ The possible contribution of this essay for understanding some of Eliade's earliest sources and the manner in which he dealt with them, has not yet been recognized by scholarship. Eliade quotes a Zoharic statement and explains: "It is necessary that man should sanctify himself before the conjugal union, so that the infant that will be born will have a complete figure... The human form corresponds to the celestial forms."⁶ The Zoharic text is drawn from Paul Vulliaud's book *La Cantique des Cantiques d'après la tradition juive*.⁷ The French author, who

- 4 This approach has been adopted already by Wendy Doniger, "Time, Sleep, and Death in the Life, Fiction, and Academic Writings of Mircea Eliade," ed. Gherardo Gnoli, *Mircea Eliade e le religioni asiatiche* (Istituto Italiano per il medio ed estremo Oriente, Roma, 1989), pp. 1-21, Gheorghe Glodeanu, *Coordinatele imaginarului in opera lui Mircea Eliade* (Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 2001), pp. 96-97, and M. Idel, "The Camouflaged Sacred in Mircea Eliade's Self-Perception, Literature and Scholarship," in eds. Christian K. Wedemeyer — Wendy Doniger, *Hermeneutics, Politics and the History of Religions, The Contested Legacies of Joachim Wach & Mircea Eliade*, (Oxford University Press, New York, 2010), pp. 159-195.
- 5 Printed in *Revista Fundatiilor Regale*, anul V, Martie 1938, no. 3, pp. 616-632. I use its reprint in the collection of Eliade's essays *Lucrurile de taina*, ed. Emil Manu, (ed. Eminescu, Galati, 1996), pp. 100-117.
- 6 *Ibidem*, p. 103. The translation from Eliade's Romanian is my own.
- 7 (Paris, 1925), p. 202. Vulliaud's French translation of a passage from *Zohar*

belonged to a tradition of French occultists, fascinated Eliade for many years, and he visited his house in France and even wrote a preface to one of his books.⁸ The study of his influence on Eliade is still a scholarly desideratum.⁹

In a footnote to the Zoharic passage quoted above Eliade wrote:

“The expression ‘so that the infant will have a complete figure’ refers, indubitably to ‘an entire¹⁰ man’ the androgyne, the ideal of all the metaphysical and religious traditions. The references to the “original man” in the *Zohar* are innumerable¹¹, and that [the generic] man comprises the female and the male that are melted perfectly in one body and which have a single soul (like Adam, before Eve was created from his rib).”

“Androgyne,” just like the assumption of the melding of the male and female in one body and one soul, are not found in the Zoharic text, and they do not reflect a plausible interpretation of Zoharic thought. However, Vulliaud’s claim of total union is found verbatim in a book by the Lyonnese occultist Antoine Blanc de Saint-Bonnet, a follower of Swedenborg, which was adduced verbatim by Vulliaud one page before the above passage from the *Zohar*, where it is written at the end of the citation:

I, fol. 90b, is “Il convient a l’homme de se sanctifier au moment de l’union conjugale, enseigne le Zohar, pour que l’enfant qui va naitre ait sa figure complete et de maniere convenable...La forme de l’homme correspond a la forme celeste.” On Vulliaud and the *Zohar* see the stark critique of Gershom Scholem, “Vulliaud’s Uebersetzung des *Sifra Di-Zeniutha* aus dem Sohar und andere neuere Literatur zur Geschichte der Kabbala,” *Monatsschrift fur die Wissenschaft des Judentums* vol. 75 (1931), pp. 347–362, 444–455.

8 See Wasserstrom, *Religion after Religion*, pp. 269-270 note 19.

9 The most comprehensive study of Eliade and esotericism is related basically to Eliade’s acquaintance with R. Guenon and gravitates around Eliade’s literaria. See Marcel Tolcea, *Eliade, Ezotericul*, (ed. EST, Bucharest, 2012), second edition. On the more scholarly aspects of Eliade and occultism see Antoine Faivre, “Modern Western Esoteric Currents in the Works of Mircea Eliade, the Extent and the Limits of their Presence,” in eds. Christian K. Wedemeyer — Wendy Doniger, *Hermeneutics, Politics and the History of Religions, The Contested Legacies of Joachim Wach & Mircea Eliade*, (Oxford University Press, New York, 2010), pp. 147-157 and Natale Spineto, “Mircea Eliade and Traditionalism,” *Aries*, vol. 1 (2001), pp. 62-86 and in some instances in Wasserstrom, *Religion after Religion*.

10 Or complete.

11 See Vulliaud, *La Cantique des Cantique*, p. 201 note 3.

“L’homme mâle et l’homme femelle sont constituées de telles sorte qu’ils doivent devenir un seul homme, ou plutôt une seule âme: et quand ils sont devenus un, il sont l’homme complet.”¹²

This is part of a lengthy exposition of a Christian understanding of the relations between male and female, quoted by Vulliaud. However, the end of the passage is not quoted by Vulliaud: “Car ni ‘l’homme n’est point sans la femme,’ ni ‘la femme n’est point sans l’homme’ dit S. Paul.¹³ Sans cette union, ils sont deux; chacun se sent comme un être divisé.”¹⁴ Thus, Vulliaud quoted a passage from his Lyonnese compatriot which has nothing to do with Kabbalah. It is however a nice Catholic mystical interpretation of a view that is attributed, problematically, to Paul, combined with a vision of reintegration of the lost unity, stemming most probably from an earlier occultist tradition.¹⁵ However, immediately after the quotation from de Saint-Bonnet,¹⁶ (without, however mentioning St. Paul) Vulliaud writes : “La citation serait interminable. On se rappelle les textes identiques de la Kabbalah.”¹⁷ Indeed, immediately afterwards Vulliaud introduces a series of Zoharic texts, which actually speak about the conjugal union between male and female, but without the assumption of loss of their sexes.

Eliade correctly understood that Vulliaud claims that the Kabbalah agrees with the passage of de Saint-Bonnet. In turn he presented the *Zohar* as dealing with the strong union of the two sexes into one body. On the basis of the misunderstanding created by Vulliaud, Eliade introduced the concept of melting of the two bodies, in Romanian, *contopire*¹⁸, which subsequently gave rise to an androgynous reading of the Zoharic source. Such a reading is not found explicitly in de Saint-Bonnet or in Vulliaud, who did not resort to this term, at least not in this context, and even less in the Zoharic source. Wasserstrom already pointed out that the contribution of Christian Kabbalah to the concept of reintegration of all beings.¹⁹ He also

12 *De l’Unité spirituelle ou de la société et de son but au-delà du temps*, (Paris, 1841), p. 1441, quoted in Vulliaud *ibidem*, p. 201.

13 Most probably an allusion to Galatians 3:28.

14 *De l’Unité spirituelle*, p. 1441.

15 See Wasserstrom, *Religion after Religion*, p. 38.

16 On other instances of the impact of de Saint-Bonnet on Vulliaud see *ibidem*, p. 154.

17 *Ibidem*, p. 201.

18 This form means, in another context, totalisation. See *Jurnalul portughez*, I, p. 102.

19 *Religion after Religion*, p. 38.

pointed out that both Scholem and Eliade often resort to the concept of the reintegration of all beings, which stems from the mid-18th century occultist Martines de Pasqually (c. 1725–1774), who may have been of Marrano origin. Eliade wrote of him “it suffices to say that for him the goal of initiation was to reintegrate man with his lost ‘Adamic privileges,’ i.e., to recover the primeval condition of ‘men-gods created in the image of God.’”²⁰ However, in Eliade’s idiosyncratic interpretation, the Zoharic passages on marriage, have turned into a pursuit of an androgynous reintegration. Immediately before the passage dealing with the *Zohar*, Eliade wrote:

“Love and marriage are even today, in some extraeuropean human societies, rituals and metaphysical valorifications of existence...Even the physics of love has a ceremonial character, by means of which man integrates himself in cosmic rhythms.”²¹

Thus, the alleged Zoharic “androgynous” state is invoked in order to exemplify the experience of integration within the cosmic rhythms by love or marriage. Eliade assumed that the *Zohar* describes marriage as a return to the Adamic state and thus to androgyny. I do not know why Eliade implies that the Zoharic texts refer to the integration in cosmic rhythms, though a reading of the *Zohar* allows the assumption that the human sexual love imitates, and also has an impact on, divine sexual intercourse. This brief discussion contains the first available nexus between the state of androgyny and the integration into a wider situation that is the core of Eliade’s later discussions of the androgyne. If I am correct, it seems that Eliade’s reading of the *Zohar* was mediated by occultists and esoterists, and contains the first textual document that illustrates Eliade’s valorification of androgyny as a main symbol for a transformation that is related to reintegration, the focal topic of his thought.

Eliade’s interest in Kabbalah and the *Zohar* is, however, much earlier than 1938. He mentions the book in a dispute he had in high-school with a Jewish colleague, one Solomon Israelovici. The former argued as to the relevance of occultism to science, and asserted that Copernicus’ theory was found already in the ancient book, the *Zohar*, which inherited the even earlier Assyrian science, which itself continues Summerian-Akkadian heritage.²² In

20 *Occultism, Witchcraft, and Cultural Fashions: Essays in Comparative Religions* (Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1978), p. 50. See also Eliade, “Occultism and Freemasonry in Eighteenth-Century France,” *History of Religions* vol. 13 (1973), pp. 89–91.

21 “Allegory or ‘Secret Language,’” p. 102.

22 “Science and Occultism,” *Vlastaru*, anul II nr. 8-10, Mai 1925, pp. 29-

this piece, written when he was 18, Eliade also refers to a series of occultists, some of whom were related to Kabbalah, like Eliphaz Levi and Madame Blavatsky. A year later, he printed a short survey on the Song of Songs an embryonic form of the essay discussed above, where he already refers to Vulliaud's two books on Kabbalah.²³ In 1928, Eliade mentioned Kabbalah twice in discussions of the magic of names, together with other forms of mysticism.²⁴

Eliade's 1938 essay, however, is the first time I am acquainted with in his writings in which he resorts to the androgyne as "the ideal of all the metaphysical and religious traditions," on the basis of what he understood to be a Zoharic passage. This approach, which looks for one unifying persistent tradition, will become a blueprint of Eliade's later discussions of the androgyne, even when the book of the *Zohar* is not mentioned more.

B] Eliade published "In Search of Adam" in the January 1940 issue of *Universul Literar*. This was a small piece, written in Romanian for the general public and contains only a few footnotes.²⁵ This short discussion was part of a longer series on related issues printed before and after this piece in the same periodical: "Adam and Eve," "Adam and Golgotha," and the androgyne in Balzac's short story *Seraphita*. The essays are not necessarily connected to each other, and their comprehension does not seem to depend on reading the entire series. Though some of the essays deal with dualities regarding gods and men, this duality is not necessarily a matter of a sexual

30, reprinted in *Cum am gasit piatra filosofala, Scrieri de tinerete, 1921-1925*, ed. Mircea Handoca, (Humanitas, Bucharest, 1996), p. 246. See also Tolcea, *Eliade Ezotericul*, p. 108. For Eliade's awareness of forms of *philosophia perennis* see his "Some Notes on *Theosophia perennis*: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy and Henry Corbin," *History of Religions*, vol. 19 (1979), pp. 167-176. I shall discuss elsewhere the context of Eliade's interest in Kabbalah in more detail.

- 23 "Cintarea Cintarilor," *Adevarul literar si artistic*, anul VII, 24 Octombrie 1926, p. 4, reprinted in *Morfologia religiilor, Prolegomene*, ed. Mircea Handoca, printed as a supplement of *Jurnal literar*, (1993), second edition, pp. 54-59.
- 24 See Eliade, *Virilitate si asceza, Scrieri de tinerete 1928*, ed. M. Handoca, (Humanitas Bucharest, 2008), pp. 196, 197.
- 25 See *Universul Literar*, January 13, vol. IL, no. 3, (1940), pp. 1, 8. The text was reprinted in *Morfologia religiilor, Prolegomene*, ed. Mircea Handoca, a supplement to *Jurnal literar*, (1993), second edition, pp. 236-239. The quotations in the following will refer to this later reprint.

polarity. (The content of this piece, as well as the elaboration in [C], will be discussed below in section 2).

C] In the latter half of 1942, the entire series of articles mentioned above was reprinted in Bucharest as a booklet, entitled *Mitul reintegrari, The Myth of Reintegration*.²⁶ This edition presented the material in a more unified manner, accompanied by more numerous footnotes. Some few short passages were added to version [B]. In this edition the essays printed earlier become part of a more accentuated vision, discussing what Eliade now emphatically describes as “the myth of reintegration.” This loose title, which represents only some parts of the essays, creates the impression that there is one overarching theme which unifies the booklet: the myth of the totalization of good and evil, or of the sacred and profane, which parallel the totalization of male and female inherent in the androgyne. Thus, androgyny or androgynization becomes part of the wider mythical complex reintegration of things split into polarities in order to reconstruct the primordial perfection. “In search for Adam” was renamed “The Androgyne Archetype.” The reediting, which strives to transform the separate essays into one “simple essay,”²⁷ was mainly done in Lisbon, during Eliade’s time as the cultural attaché of Romania there.

D] “La *coincidentia oppositorum* et le mystère de la totalité,” published in *Eranos Jahrbuch* (1958) is a transcript of a lecture Eliade delivered at the Eranos conference in Ascona, Switzerland. It covers some of the topics discussed in the essays collected in the *Myth of Reintegration*,²⁸ and will be discussed in section 3.

E] The Eranos lecture was republished slightly amplified both in text and footnotes, in 1962, in the French collection *Méphistophélès et l’androgyne*.²⁹ The duality of the content reflected in the title, better reflects the content of the essays since his discussions of Faust and Mephistopheles do not assume an androgyny. This French version was translated into English and published,

26 (Vreimea, Bucharest, 1942), now reprinted in the collection of his Romanian essays, *Drumul spre centru*, eds., G. Liiceanu – A. Plesu, (Univers, Bucuresti, 1991), pp. 328-386. I quote below from this more recent reprint. The collection was also translated into Italian: *Il mito della integrazione* (Jaca Books, Milano, 1989).

27 *Jurnalul portughez*, I, p. 473.

28 *Eranos Jahrbuch*, vol. 27, (1958), pp. 195-236.

29 *Méphistophélès et l’androgyne* (Paris, Gallimard, 1962).

in 1965, in *The Two and the One*.³⁰ This variant is the best known; it is the basis of many descriptions of Eliade's views on the androgyne.

F] In Eliade's *Encyclopedia of Religion* the entry "androgyne" was signed by Eliade, together with Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty.³¹ From a conceptual point of view this essay is more sophisticated and is based on the new distinction between the splitting and fusion androgyny, found already several years earlier in Doniger O'Flaherty's book.³² The broader context is not our concern here, but the entry also repeats some of Eliade's earlier views, especially in *The Two and the One*.³³ So, for example, we learn that

"In the mythology of mysticism, however chaos is positive, the desire to merge back into chaos is the goal of human existence, the supreme integration toward which one strives. In many rituals, too, androgyny is 'a symbolic restoration of 'Chaos', of the undifferentiated unity that preceded the Creation, and this return to the homogeneous takes the form of a supreme regeneration, a prodigious increase of power."³⁴

In the *Encyclopedia*, the androgyny of Adam according to the Bible and the Midrash are succinctly mentioned but neither the *Zohar* nor other Kabbalistic Jewish texts that offer a rich repository of different concepts and approaches to the androgyne are mentioned.³⁵ Except for this entry, Eliade did not return in a significant manner to the topic of androgyny that fascinated him so much in the earlier phase of his life for a long period in his career, between 1958 and 1986. It seems that variant [E] represents the longest and most representative treatment of the theme under scrutiny here.

The first five versions are part of a nucleus articulated already in 1938, As we shall see below, Eliade not only added material to the earlier version, but also chose not to include material used in the earlier two Romanian versions in the French-English ones. In addition to these treatments, Eliade discussed the issue in a more succinct manner in his other writings.³⁶

30 Tr. J. M. Cohen, (Harper Torchbooks, New York, Evanston, 1965), pp. 78-124.

31 (MacMillan, London, New York, 1986), vol. 1, pp. 276-281.

32 Cf. *Women, Androgynes, and Other Mythical Beasts*.

33 See, e.g. *Encyclopedia of Religion*, p. 279.

34 Ibidem, p. 277. He refers to his *The Two and the One*, pp. 114, 119, 122. Compare to Wasserstrom, *Religion after Religion*, p. 204.

35 *Encyclopedia of Religion*, p. 277.

36 *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, tr. R. Sheed, (World Publishing, New York, 1972), pp. 419-425 and *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries: The Encounter*

2. Early Conceptualizations of the Androgyne in the Two Romanian Essays

What are Eliade's major claims in the earlier nucleus as formulated in the two Romanian versions [B] and [C]?

1. The myth of the androgyne is found in mystical traditions of the monotheistic religions expressed in allegories and symbols. Alchemy should be understood similarly, as a secret tradition.
2. Secrecy is connected to the "fact" that these traditions were considered heretical and also because this myth stems from Greco-Christian Gnosticism, which inherited this view from sources that predate the later monotheistic religions by a millennium. Gnosticism itself was a secret cult based on rites of initiation. According to Eliade, the myth of the androgyne occupies a central place in Gnosticism and he quotes three examples from Gnostic texts preserved in patristic literature: the *Evangelium of the Egyptians*, quoted in Clement of Alexandria, the views of Simon Magus, preserved in St. Hippolytus and the Naasean Gnostic school. Eliade quotes short extracts from the three Gnostic sources. Though the Gnostic traditions are fragmentary, Eliade believes that they preserve earlier traditions.
3. Eliade claims that the androgyne is a symbol for human perfection, and the achievement of this perfection is dependent on returning to the primordial state by transcending sexual polarity. This is an amorphous and indeterminate situation, which he refers to as a reintegration or "totalization".
4. This return is compared to the mystics' loss within or their absorption in the divinity, or the Hindu ascetics' state of impassibility and detachment, "like stones". This is the result of the desire to abolish the human condition, a claim that runs through Eliade's oeuvre in general.
5. This understanding of the androgyne is conceived of as being shared by persons over millennia and in different religions, and understood as an "archetype".
6. In some Jewish traditions Adam was believed to have been bisexual and thus an undetermined being, and the reintegration is predicated upon a return to an Adamic state.³⁷

between Contemporary Faiths and Archaic Realities, tr. Philip Mairet, (Harper and Row, New York, 1975), pp. 174-175.

37 This theory of the first man as both a unity and a totality, is found later in *A History of Religious Ideas*, vol. I, p. 165, and see also note 7 there. Eliade's

7. Eliade explicitly mentions the interest of Jacob Boehme, E. Swedenborg and F. von Baader in this topic, inscribing himself in the series of occultist thinkers.³⁸

Version [C] is not markedly different from version [B], but one of the most significant changes is the reference to Philo and early Christianity as expressing an androgynous vision in the figure of the Logos. Reintegration is depicted as taking place within the “preexistent totality of the Logos,” as part of a scheme that includes three stages:

1. The preexistent Logos as the total, universal or divine, reality.
2. The fall, or the fragmentation and suffering.
3. The Redeemer reintegrates in his totality, the entire existence, differentiated in the individual lives.³⁹

This threefold drama, which combines cosmic and individual events, does not recur in the later variants of Eliade’s discussion of reintegration.

These additions create a tension between the claims in version [B] as to the subversive dimensions of the secret traditions, and the claim in [C] that Philo and Paul adopted androgynous approaches. It is difficult to see how these two figures were in fact hidden Gnostics and marginal figures in the history of the monotheistic traditions.

Eliade now describes regression to this amorphous totality as having a “deep metaphysical” sense. The spiritual reintegration was formulated “sometimes in mythical terms, sometimes in theological terms.”⁴⁰

In the two later Romanian versions, Eliade refers to the Jewish mystical tradition, to which he gives more prominence than to Christian and Muslim mysticism, and following the assessments in variant [B], he writes:

“The myth of the androgyne was likewise active in Kabbalah, though those texts, which are extremely difficult, circulated in very restrained circles of learned persons and Jewish mystics. The Zohar (III, 5a, 18b

discussions of totality predate Heidegger’s views on the this subject.

38 *Drumul spre centru*, p. 368. See above note 3.

39 *ibidem*, pp. 374-375.

40 *Ibidem*, p. 375. Cf. also his *Autobiography*, I: *Journey East, Journey West*, tr. Mac Linscott Ricketts, (Harper and Row, San Francisco, 1981), p. 256: “Perhaps my yearning to love two women at the same time was none other than an episode in a long secret history that even I did not understand very well. I was trying to compensate for my fundamental incapability of becoming a “saint” by resorting to a paradoxical, nonhuman experience, which at least opened to me the way to the mystery of totality.”

etc.) preserves even a “marital” interpretation. Of the myth of the androgyne: man does not become a real person (namely an original man), but when he achieves on earth the conjugal union. This is an echo of an ancient mystical function of the marriage: the perfection of the individual by totalisation. In fact the entire Kabbalah is based upon the homologization man/God, and the human marriage is not, for the Jewish mysticism, (which in its majority is occult commentaries on the Song of Songs)⁴¹, but a pale image of the union of Israel with God. With another occasion we shall see how the myth of the androgyne, is clearer at the beginning of Judaism, since Adam was conceived of as an androgyne.”⁴²

Eliade returned as promised to the question of Adam’s androgyny in “Adam and Eve” published in the same month,⁴³ in the same journal, in which he describes Adam as an androgynous being, based on some studies on the midrashic interpretations of Genesis 1:27. He claims that Primordial men in many cultures were always described in such a manner, minizing the importance of the claim of one of the scholars,⁴⁴ who proposed to see an Indo-European impact on the Semitic versions of this myth, arguing that

- 41 Already in 1926, in a piece that deals exclusively with the *Song of Songs*, Eliade put the Kabbalistic interpretations of the Song of Songs in relief. (The piece was reprinted in *Morfologia religiilor*, pp. 54-59). Already then, at the age of 19, he referred to Vulliaud’s book on the *Zohar*. We have seen above that he was acquainted with themes found in the *Zohar* earlier in his life.
- 42 *Morfologia religiilor*, pp. 236-237. In version [C] to be described immediately below, the text is reproduced exactly but Eliade adds a footnote, where he refers to the book of Paul Vulliaud, *La Kabbale Juive* (Paris, 1932), 2 volumes, and *Le Cantique des Cantiques d’apres la tradition juive*. The question may be asked how the human marriage is consonant with the loss within the divinity or the attainment of the indifference. See *Drumul spre centru*, p. 371 note 1.
- 43 *Universul literar*, anul IL (1940), January 27, no. 5, p. 1, 8, enlarged in *Drumul spre centru*, pp. 376-382. It should be mentioned that many years before, Eliade printed in a newspaper, a small piece entitled “Adam, Eve and Cain,” (*Cuvintul*, 1928), and it was reprinted in *Morfologia religiilor*, pp. 239-241, that it has nothing to do with the later piece “Adam and Eve”.
- 44 See Alexander Haggerty Krappe, “The Birth of Eve,” in *Occident and Orient: Being Studies in Semitic Philology and Literature, Jewish history and philosophy and folklore in the widest sense, in honour of Haham Dr. M. Gaster’s 80th birthday: Gaster Anniversary Volume*, eds. Bruno Schindler, Arthur Marmorstein, (Taylor’s Foreign Press, London, 1936), pp. 312-322.

the theme of the androgynous first man is too widespread in order to adopt such a solution.⁴⁵ Eliade adopts the proposal of another scholar, which suggested to emend the Hebrew text of Genesis 1:27, from the traditional version 'otam, "them," to 'oto, "him," so that the creation in the verse refers to male alone, and not to the male and female together,⁴⁶ in order to elicit a clear androgynous interpretation from the biblical verse.⁴⁷

In the earlier versions of the essay Eliade introduces the importance of ritualistic orgy as one of the means to achieve a state of totalisation or androgynization, an issue that will preoccupy him in scholarship many times later.⁴⁸ Though this is not the single path toward reintegration (the other one would be yoga) Eliade assumes that the orgy was meant to achieve a

"totalization of the good and bad, the same coincidence of the sacred and the profane, the definitive melting of the contraries, the annihilation of the human condition, by a regression toward the non-differentiated, in the amorphous. The 'shift of the garments' is framed perfectly in the orgiastic experience. Since also the androgyne is the melting of the contraries in the same individual."⁴⁹

The pursuit of reintegration is considered a constant in religion: "The ideal type of humanity which has been dreamt also by Plato and the Gnostics, and the mystics in the Middle Ages, and the German romantics – is dreamt and realized, by rudimentary ritual means, by "the wild people now-a-days."⁵⁰ In *The Myth of Reintegration* he repeats the view found in the earlier essay on the secret language as to the ritual dimension of love.⁵¹ And here too [C], he resorts to the concept of melting.⁵²

Eliade thus adopts an approach that conceives androgyny as both a very ancient tradition and one which inspires the search for perfection in the form of androgyny for many centuries. This perfection is presented by him

45 *Drumul spre centru*, p. 378.

46 See the theories exposed in Krappe, "The Birth of Eve," pp. 312-313.

47 *Drumul spre centru*, p. 377.

48 See, e.g., *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, pp. 356-359; On the connection between orgy and reintegration see especially, pp. 358-359. See also his *Occultism, Witchcraft, and Cultural Fashions*, pp. 88-92.

49 *Drumul spre centru*, pp. 379-380 and compare to the later formulation in *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, p. 424, *A History of Religious Ideas*, I, p. 165 note 7, and in *The Two and the One*, p. 115.

50 *Drumul spre centru*, p. 381.

51 *Ibidem*, pp. 381-382. See also *ibidem*, p. 387.

52 *Ibidem*, p. 382.

not just as a myth, or an ideal, but as a major topic that is accompanied by rituals of androgynization.⁵³ Eliade assumes that perfection was envisioned as including the ideal of androgyny and deeds intended to enact it both in antiquity and during the Middle Ages, as well as much earlier in archaic traditions. We may therefore discern, in the manner in which the androgyne-theme is addressed, the first meaningful example for the method that is going to inspire the entire project of Eliade in the years to come: the importance of a primordial religion and the repetition of the ancient acts or rituals, in order to retrieve the lost perfection.

The Romanian versions are predicated on the assumption that the traditions about the androgyne are very old, were transmitted orally, reached some Gnostic sources which influenced the three main secret traditions from which modern thinkers like Swedenborg, and, under his influence, Goethe and Balzac, drew inspiration for their literary compositions. According to the “Adam and Eve,” an ideal vision of Adam as an androgyne reverberated in Midrashic sources. At least in two places in those essays Eliade refers in a clear manner to the coincidence of the opposites, though this concept does not play a central role in the Romanian essays.⁵⁴

The later versions of the earlier Romanian variants introduce a sharper emphasis on the *coincidentia oppositorum*, as one of the most important significances of the totality, and to a certain extent, the emergence of a claim as to the affinities between the orgiastic practices and the attainment of the reintegration. However, Eliade is much less interested in integrating religion in the history of Western philosophy as in a pre-historical archaic moment, which reverberates in philosophy.

3. The Eranos Lecture and its Later Version

Eliade’s lecture delivered at the Eranos conference in Ascona, “*La coincidentia oppositorum* et le mystère de la totalité,” was printed in 1958. The plan to print in French an elaborated version of the second Romanian version can be dated as early as February 1943, as we learn from a letter Eliade addressed to his friend in Romania, the philosopher Constantin Noica, who took care of printing his books in Bucharest.⁵⁵ In this later French variant he presented most of the topics found already in the series of publications reprinted

53 Ibidem, pp. 379-381.

54 Ibidem, pp. 379, 382.

55 Appendix to *Jurnalul Portughez si alte scrieri*, ed., Sorin Alexandrescu, tr. Mihai Zamfir, (Humanitas, Bucharest, 2006), I, p. 475.

in *The Myth of Reintegration*, but the manner in which the material was represented, and the selection of what part of the material adduced earlier should be eliminated, generated a dramatically different exposition, though the original message remained basically the same. Eliade now excluded the theory of the secret transmission, the references to the three mystical traditions, and any discussion of Adam as androgyne, while adding other materials, never mentioned in the Romanian essays.⁵⁶ Comparing Romanian variant [C] to the Eranos lecture shows that Eliade prepared his French lecture from a similar text, since the later variant included almost all the new material found in the 1942 text but not in the variant of 1940. In any case, the 1958 exposition reflects developments in Eliade's scholarship in the early fifties, which include, especially, references to the androgyne of the shamans and the Yogins.⁵⁷ Thus, a totally different balance between the identity of the sources which, in his opinion, fostered Eliade's claim about the meaning of the androgyne, is conspicuous in the Eranos lecture and its later elaboration: it is now grounded in the most recent material he dealt with rather than what was cited in the Romanian versions, as the occurrence of Shamanism shows.

It may be said that in all the main versions of the androgyne as perfection that Eliade presented over the 16 years of repeating his theory since his lecture in Eranos, he refers to the Midrash as one of his sources. Almost always he offers a precise source for his claim, *Bereshit Rabba* I, 4 fol. 6 col. 2, followed by the translation in English: "man on the right side and woman on the left side, but God has cloven him into two halves."⁵⁸ Sometimes the quote is fuller, but the part quoted here, does not exist in any version of *Bereshit Rabba* I am acquainted with.⁵⁹ That this version of the Midrash is

56 This move is already evident in his French 1949, *Traité*, translated in English as *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, pp. 423-425, though he mentions the Kabbalah quite succinctly, see p. 425. In *A History of Religious Ideas*, I, p. 165, a text written in 1975 and printed in 1978, Adam is still an androgyne, though I think that this discussion reflects his older attitude, as exposed, as he himself mentions in the Introduction, p. XVI, views he presented in Bucharest and in Paris.

57 See below note 136.

58 *Drumul spre centru*, p. 376, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, p. 423, *Myth, Dreams, and Mysteries*, p. 175, *Eranos Jahrbuch*, 1958, p. 220, and *The Two and the One*, p. 104.

59 See the translation and analysis of this Midrashic tradition in Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel, Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture*, (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1993), pp. 42-46.

unknown does not mean that Eliade attempted to invent, or even invented, a Midrashic text. What actually happened is much simpler: Eliade has simply mistaken the view about the Midrash as expressed by Krappe as his own understanding, as if it is a quotation from the Midrash. Krappe himself wrote: "Others⁶⁰ are of a different opinion: the first man was man on the right side and female on his left: then God separated the two halves."⁶¹ This is not a paraphrase of Midrash either. The concept of two halves does not exist not only in the specific Rabbinic references as adduced by Krappe, but to my best knowledge never in late ancient Rabbinic sources, though it did appear, in the mystical sources in the Middle Ages. Eliade transformed this erroneous paraphrase into a primary source, which and he then quoted in a series of writings.

However, these philological errors are minor in comparison to the much broader problem: Eliade's major claim regarding the androgyne as an ideal, does not appear in the Midrash, but in fact it contradicts it. Though Eliade never explicitly said as much, this is the significance of his recurrent citation of the "Midrashic" passage. The Eranos lecture includes therefore a misrepresentation of the Midrashic view, that continues what may be found already in the Romanian versions: the implicit assumption that the androgynous status of Adam, whose pertinence Eliade took pains to demonstrate, is presented as if the Midrash regarded this state as ideal, while in fact the latter, following the Hebrew Bible, understood Adam's status after the bisection of Eve from his body as improved. Perhaps following Krappe, Eliade applied a Platonic reading of the ideal spherical body in the manner Plato described the androgyne, as being an ideal, to the "Midrash," whose conceptual framework is different. However, following Dumézil, Eliade also is concerned with the more ancient theories that he translates in terms of androgyny, conceived of as a form of pre-philosophical form of reflection.⁶²

Thus, Jewish material, which played a major role in the 1940/1942 versions of his studies, and even earlier, was marginalized in the 1958 lecture at Ascona, and what remained is a caricature of a more variegated and rich picture of the concepts of androgyne and *du-partzufin* found in Judaism.⁶³

60 Other early Rabbinic scholars.

61 "The Birth of Eve," p. 314.

62 See *Eranos Jahrbuch*, 1958, p. 198.

63 See Idel, *Kabbalah & Eros*, pp. 53-103. For another approach to the androgyne and *du-partzufin*, much closer to Eliade's, but emphasizing the concept of the masculine androgyne, see Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*. Moreover, the phallogocentrism in early Eliade, which was unknown to

If the accuracy of the thesis of the ideal androgyne significantly depends on the two Jewish sources that remain in the post-war variants of his discussions, it is groundless. What should be stressed in this context is that the “Midrashic” text is one of the few quotes Eliade quoted verbatim. I do not know whether the situation I described here is symptomatic to the manner in which Eliade adduced his sources in the context of the ideal androgyne. For the time being I did not see any serious scholarly attempt to check the preciseness of his quotations and evaluate the correctness of the interpretations he offered, but rather some repetitions of his views, including by scholars who are acquainted with Hebrew sources.⁶⁴

And so, the variants of Eliade’s discussions of androgyny represent an extension of some ideas, as well as reediting and redaction which are far from presenting a linear development. Eliade added and subtracted material from earlier versions, changed the titles of the variants, and sometimes updated the bibliography. This dynamic approach however, does not enrich the earlier discussions by analyses of texts or detailed topics, but integrated additional topics into the myth of reintegration. Conceptually speaking, Eliade’s views on the topic did not change since they were articulated in 1940 in a newspaper essay.

4. The Earlier Emergence of Totality and Coincidentia Oppositorum: Literaria

Eliade’s interpretation of the Andrigine thus preceded the essays discussed above. What was the conceptual structure that informed this interpretation? The concepts of *coincidentia oppositorum* and reintegration or totalisation are prominent in this context. Steven M. Wasserstrom investigated the role played by the former concept in the studies of some of the participants at the Eranos conferences, including Eliade’s.⁶⁵ Eliade’s own resort to this concept has been analyzed by a several other scholars, among whom I would like to mention: Brian S. Rennie,⁶⁶ Wilhelm Danca,⁶⁷ Douglas Allen

Wolfson, is reminiscent of the later emphasis of Wolfson’s interpretation of Kabbalah. Given the suppression of the references to the *Zohar* in the later variants of his essay, neither Wasserstrom nor Wolfson could be acquainted with Eliade’s early discussions.

64 See above notes 2, 3.

65 *Religion after Religion*, pp. 37-39, 203-214.

66 *Reconstructing Eliade*, pp. 32-40.

67 *Mircea Eliade, Definitio Sacri*, (Ars Longa, Iasi, 1998), pp. 145, 249-254, 255-256, 259, 330-332.

and Wasserstrom.⁶⁸ However, despite the importance of this concept in the circle of Eranos scholars, there can be no doubt that the intellectual environment of the conference that influenced Eliade's first resorts to it. In his 1958 lecture he explicitly mentioned C. G. Jung in this context, which is added to his earlier discussions.⁶⁹ Eliade's independent resort to this concept is prominently demonstrated by the fact that Eliade taught a whole course on Nicolaus Cusanus at the University of Bucharest in 1934/1935.⁷⁰ The German theologian was indubitably one of the major sources for the dissemination of this concept. Thus, there is no reason to connect the acquaintance with this concept or its elaboration, to Eliade's acquaintance with the ambiance with the circle of the Eranos scholars, who were acquainted with it independently. I therefore claim that for Eliade the centrality of totality, understood sometimes even as more important than perfection, predated the essays on the androgyne, and at the beginning, it inspired his interpretation of this concept more than *coincidentia oppositorum*.⁷¹ Only later on was the coincidence of the opposites moved to the center of the explication of the return to the primordial totality. However, from our point of view not just the ascent of the centrality of *coincidentia oppositorum* is important but its connection to the concept of the androgyne which is evident in the two versions of the essay on Adam.

Almost all the versions of the androgyne-theme mentioned above contain the argument that primordial totality is the ultimate aim of reintegration. Articulated in 1939, the theme of totality was, however, not new to Eliade at that time.⁷² "Thirst for the all," as a theme emerged already in *The Apology*

68 *Myth and Religion in Mircea Eliade*, (Garland Publishing, New York, London, 1998), pp. 157-158 and *Religion after Religion*, pp. 213-214, respectively.

69 *Eranos Jahrbuch*, 1958, pp. 218-219.

70 One of Eliade's childhood friends, Marcel Avramescu, a Jew who converted to Christianity as Mihail Avramescu, and who was interested in Kabbalah, spiritualism and occultism, wrote an M.A. thesis on Cusanus at the University of Bucharest.

71 On totality in Eliade see, especially, Adrian Marino, *Hermeneutica lui Mircea Eliade* (Dacia, Cluj, 1980), pp. 131-141, and Shafique Keshavjee, "Totalité, paradoxe et liberté dans l'oeuvre de Mircea Eliade," *Homo religious, to Honor Mircea Eliade*, eds. L.M. Arcade, I. Manea, E. Stamatescu, (The Mircea Eliade Research Institute, Los Angeles, 1990), pp. 262-263.

72 See his essay "The Hindu Pantheon," printed first in 1939, and reprinted more recently in *Lucrurile de Taina*, pp.133-135. The existence of discussions about "total" and "totality" in the earlier Eliade, complicates the attribution of a role that the Iron Guard ideology, a totalitarian one, could play in

of *Virility*, a confused small piece written and printed in its first version in late 1927, when Eliade was 20 (it was reprinted in 1928).⁷³ As the author put it much later,

“The essay was an attempt to make “virility” – a *cliché* I had borrowed from Papini’s *Maschilità*⁷⁴ – a mode of being in the world and also an instrument of knowledge and, therefore, of mastery of the world. I understood by “virility” that which (as I was to discover later in India), Buddhist Tantra symbolizes in the *vajra*, literally “thunderbolt,” also represents the phallus⁷⁵, or more precisely, the “spiritual” potentialities inherent in and specific to the organ. I believed, therefore, that virility in its absolute form was equivalent to pure spirit.⁷⁶ I accepted Eros only as totally subservient to “virility”: otherwise, the absolute unity of the spirit risked being shattered. Love, in all its modes, I saw only as an instrument for the reintegration of the Spirit. This mixture of asceticism, metaphysical exultation, and sexuality (a mixture that again recalls India)...”⁷⁷

shaping Eliade’s scholarship. See Elaine Fisher, “Fascists Scholars, Fascist Scholarship: The Quest of Ur-Fascism and the Study of Religion,” in eds. Christian K. Wedemeyer — Wendy Doniger, *Hermeneutics, Politics and the History of Religions, The Contested Legacies of Joachim Wach & Mircea Eliade*, (Oxford University Press, New York, 2001), pp. 261-283. It should be pointed out that the “late Culiianu” namely the last writings of Ioan P. Couliano, display a certain effort to explain “all” by his *mathesis universalis*, a combinatory explanation of the emergence of cultural creations in many fields.

- 73 See “The Apology for Virility,” *Gindirea*, 8-9, 1928. On this piece see Turcanu, *Mircea Eliade*, p. 95.
- 74 The impact of this essay about masculinity on Eliade is evident already in 1925. See his essay printed in this year, reprinted in *Cum am gasit piatra filosofala, Scrieri de tinerete, 1921-1925*, ed. Mircea Handoca, (Humanitas, Bucharest, 1996), p. 232.
- 75 See below note 108.
- 76 See the accusation he levels against the Moldavians that they are melancholic and do not have virility, which Eliade formulated in 1928 in his critique of the Moldavian spirit, in “Against Moldavia,” reprinted in the collection of essays Mircea Eliade, *Profetismul Romnesc*, (Roza Vinturilor, Bucuresti, 1990), vol. I, pp. 97-98. For equilibrium and sensuality see also *Jurnalul portughez*, I, p. 336.
- 77 *Autobiography*, I, p. 134. For the nexus between masculinity and asceticism see *Gaudeamus*, written in 1928 (ed. Garamond, Bucharest, N.D.), p. 129. For an emphasis on virility see *ibidem*, pp. 136-137. For the resort to the term

Later he said that the essay was about the wish to experience “*everything at one and the same time*.”⁷⁸

The claims formulated in this essay reverberated in *The Return from the Paradise*, a novel Eliade wrote over 1931-1933, printed early in 1934. In it, he depicts Pavel Anicet’s double love-affair, with two women at the same time: Una and Ghighi. While the former stands for One, the later points, presumably, for the Two, as the repetition of the form Ghi in her name shows. While the former is described as the “unity of the spirit”⁷⁹, the latter woman stands for mediocrity.⁸⁰ Pavel decides to commit suicide in an attempt to escape the tension of this situation, and in one of the last pages of the novel, we find the following reflection before shooting himself to death: “Death, ecstasy. Death, an instrument of knowledge. Death, a means of embracing the unity,⁸¹ the all.”⁸² The novel ends by describing Pavel’s feeling after he shoots himself: “In that moment he wished all the things, as in a fall without end, a vertiginous slide toward a bottom unknown to anyone.”⁸³ The form *toate lucrurile*, “all things,” includes the Romanian term that is also related, etymologically, to totality. Perhaps this description also alludes to reintegration, in addition to the rather clear reference to totality.

“instrument of knowledge” see also below the passage from the end of *The Return from Paradise*.

78 *Autobiography*, p. 134. Emphases in the original.

79 *Intoarcerea din Rai*, (Editura Rum-Irina, Bucuresti, 1992), p. 150.

80 *Ibidem*, p. 69.

81 In Romanian the term is *total*, all. The two terms, Unity and All or totality, occur religion later on in Eliade’s studies of religion. See, e.g., *Eranos Jahrbuch*, 1958, p. 221 and *The Two and the One*, p. 115. Compare also the phrase found in *Stefania*, the last part of the unfinished trilogy of which *The Return from Paradise* is the first part. See *Viata Noua*, ed. M. Handoca, (*Jurnalul Literar*, 1999), p. 59, where the protagonist says: “Sometimes I would like to seize all.”

82 *Intoarcerea din Rai*, p. 299. For the expression “instrument of knowledge” see note 77 above. For another discussion of death as an instrument of action see the view that Eliade attributes to Ion Mota, a major figure in the Iron Guard pantheon, in the fragment of the last part of the unfinished trilogy. See *Viata Noua*, p. 116: “Whoever knows how to die, will never be a slave,” upon which he comments “death understood as a perfect instrument action and insurrection”. For the important role that Eliade intended to allow to the Iron Guard, according to his initial notes concerning the novel, see *ibidem*, p. 203.

83 *Intoarcerea din Rai*, p. 301.

A relationship with more than one woman at the same time is also a main theme in the sequel to *Return from Paradise*, *The Hooligans*, printed late in 1935, where the Petru Anicet (Pavel's brother), lives at the same time with a prostitute, Nora, and his adolescent student and admirer, Anisoara. This time, however, it seems that only his mother is committing suicide. However, nothing metaphysical is involved in this double erotic affair. Eliade's longest and most important novel, *Noaptea de Sinziene*, (in English *The Forbidden Forest*), in which the protagonist Stefan loves two women at the same time, is different,⁸⁴ but significantly more metaphysical is, however, his short story *The Bridge*. This enigmatic piece of literature strives to represent some of the concepts that were especially dear to Eliade, including *coincidentia oppositorum*. One of the protagonists, perhaps the most important one, is an unnamed beautiful lieutenant, who is described by using the term *coincidentia oppositorum* and negative theology, several times. He spends his evenings with some twelve, or ten, young ladies, trying to find out which of them embodies the Great Goddess of nature on any given night. In my opinion, the implicit orgiastic elements are present even as late as 1963, when this short story was written.

Not only his Romanian critiques that were shocked by the sexual violence of some of his 1930s novels, written in the thirties, which include rather obscene scenes, in which girls of the age of nine and twelve are involved as possessed temptresses,⁸⁵ but also Eliade himself was surprised by this violence when he rereading some of those novels in the early forties in Portugal. In 1945, after his rereading of *The Hooligans*, a decade after its publication in Romania, he confessed:

“The exasperated and brutal sexuality of this book is, pure and simple, making me ill. Philip Léon wrote me around 1936 that if indeed the [novel] *Hooligans* reflects my soul and my being, I am a miserable, since sexuality makes me impenetrable for to a spiritual transfiguration. Then, I thought that he exaggerated. However, today, this fate is depressing me, this murky and insatiable carnality, which,

84 See Mircea Eliade, *Ordeal by Labyrinth, Conversations with Claude-Henri Roquest*, tr. D. Coltman, (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1982), pp. 175-177.

85 See, especially, the two novels *Isabel si apele diavolului*, and *Domnisoara Cristina*. In more general terms about the attitude to temptation and women in those novels see Eugen Simion, *Mircea Eliade: Nodurile si semnele prozei*, (Junimea, Iasi, 2006), pp. 65-82.

indubitably, is hindering me to “realize” myself, according to my real stature.”⁸⁶

It is hard to find a more sincere and clear-cut recognition as to the early erotic exaggerations. Unlike his Romanian critics in the mid-thirties, who condemned his literature as pornography and ultimately were capable of getting him suspended from his teaching position at Bucharest University,⁸⁷ for our purposes what is important is to better understand the background of the emergence of the peculiar understanding of the androgyne as related to orgiastic rituals. As we shall see immediately below, orgies and love (or sex), turned in some of their forms into what he calls rituals of androgyneization, though he never mentions a feeling of androgyneization in a personal experience he underwent.

5. An Early Conceptual Matrix for Later Understanding Androgyne: Eliade as a Strong Reader

And so, notions Eliade used to interpret as instances where he detected the concept of androgyne, can be traced to developments in his literary work during the twelve years since his first reflections on the topic in 1938. “Androgyne” was not mentioned in those early works, though the concepts used by Eliade in order to explicate its religious message had nevertheless been aired in personal and literary contexts. The novels and the earlier essays before that year seem to have prepared the way for the later proclamation that is connected to the special significance of the androgyne. It was, so to speak, a symbol or an archetype that Eliade used to combine some of the concepts he was acquainted with before. This may explain why the material Eliade quoted in the first Romanian essay on the topic is relatively poor, hardly convincing, and some of it was abandoned by him in the later variants of these essays. Even the text “quoted” from the Midrash *Bereshit Rabba*, that recurs from the first to the last of these essays is hardly related to the message he intended to illustrate. What in fact happened is that a youthful flirt with ideas like totality, paradox and reintegration, initially expressed without any sustained connection to the history of religion, but to the status of the new generation in Romania in the thirties, for whom *Apology for Virility* was often considered somewhat of a manifesto, has been imposed on “androgyne,” a religious concept that has a variety of meanings, and was

86 See *Jurnalul Portughez*, I, p. 364.

87 On the entire affair see Turcanu, *Mircea Eliade*, pp. 257-260.

thus transformed as part of a quasi-perennial theology. This concept was also applied to Eliade's understanding of major aspects of Yoga and then to Shamanism,⁸⁸ generating a theory that may be considered the backbone of his phenomenology of religion, at least for a certain phase in his thought. All this was done out of a sense that all authentic religions are basically one, and that Eliade's own life was but one manifestation of this larger atemporal phenomenon. This belief in the homogeneity of the real, in the past and in the present, allowed Eliade to collect from a variety of unrelated sources, ideas, concepts, impressions, based mainly on secondary discussions, and present them as all pointing, *mutatis mutandis*, in the same direction. This is not a diffusionist approach, rather a perennial one.⁸⁹

One of the problems that haunt the scholarly aspects of the above enterprise is their academic genealogy: Eliade started his reflections on the androgyne by printing them in a non-academic periodical, without footnotes, and then he elaborated on them later on and added some notes, while he was in Portugal and for a short time in the summer of 1942 in Bucharest.⁹⁰ General ideas and intuitions matter more than the primary sources he claimed were expressing his ideas. Indeed, those grand claims contributed much to his fame, though some of his more mature and important contributions, namely the books on Yoga and Shamanism have contributed much less to his celebrity in popular circles.

As I see it, the basic problem that daunted the Eliadian interpretation of the androgyne is the assumption of an idealized primordial totality, or state of chaos, from which everything emerges and strives to reintegrate, especially the archaic persons and the mystics, by overcoming the opposites. This resembles the threefold distinction mentioned above in the variant [C]. Though speaking about reintegration into totality, the assumption is that the techniques are generating a process of disintegration of personality. This view has been described as representing a certain, privileged form of

88 See *Yoga, Freedom and Immortality* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1969), pp. 55, 97, 99, 270, 271, 304, and *Shamanism, Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* tr. Willard R. Trask, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1964), p. 153 note 37. Those applications are later than the 1940 essay on the androgyne.

89 See Eliade's minimizing, in fact dismissing, Karppe's theory as to the possibility of the influence of a hypothetical Hindu-European myth of the androgyne on the Semitic myth in *Drumul spre centru*, p. 378.

90 See Turcanu, *Mircea Eliade*, p. 325, and *Jurnalul portughez*, I, pp. 127, 132, 436, 439-440, 442, 473.

religion, which was never explicated as such in any single religious source. Eliade invented “androgyne” as a concept in this context and used it in order to interpret the fragments he discerned of this totality, in the various manifestation in the documents that survived, written texts, rituals or any other form of documentation. Eliade alone possessed this form of total understanding, since he believed that the original ancient religions were shattered under the impact of the Judeo-Christian tradition, and later on under the impact of modernity. It was his task, as a scholar of the history of religion, to restore it in order to heal the wounds inflicted by secularism. With this general picture in mind, he approached a variety of religious documents, and chose from them small segments in order to reconstruct what he conceived of as the pristine and, for the modern man, the lost picture.

This deep conviction guided him in his interpretation of the religious documents as if they reflected, at least in many cases, the lost primordial totality and the will to regain it, at least in part. This starting point created a hermeneutical propensity that transformed Eliade as a strong reader of texts. Eliade uses an exegetical technique that I call “oblique” analysis: the belief in the existence of a universal totality, which allows the importing of many elements from one religious context, to a markedly different one, since both are believed to represent the same theory or the same type of experience. Religious documents become a hypertext, which allows for presenting theories as universal to bring together different topics and import from one corpus of writings to another. The need to demonstrate the existence of an entire theory in each of the specific documents is a complex enterprise, based on some interpretive license combined with preconceptions which fill in many important gaps. However, the result was an over-reading of some of the documents he chose to interpret in such a manner. Above, I discussed the few instances when he referred to Jewish texts, and I will not extrapolate as to the situation in the case of other religious texts. This obliqueness is also evident in other cases which discuss the material with which I am better acquainted. So, for example, Eliade explains the meaning of the Lurianic complex of *Tiqqun*: “as for the *Tikkun*, the “restitution” of the ideal order, the reintegration of the primordial All, it is the secret goal of human existence, or in other words, the Redemption.”⁹¹

91 *A History of Religious Ideas*, (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, London, 1985), vol. III, p. 174. See also Scholem’s various resorts to the concept of reintegration adduced by Wasserstrom, *Religion after Religion*, pp. 38-39.

Though the understanding of *Tiqqun* as restitution is adequate, the interpretation offered by the following phrase “as the reintegration of the primordial All” is an insertion of an Eliadian topos into a context which is not related to it. When Eliade uses this phrase he means the personal experience of reintegration of man, following his “fall,” into the pristine origin. However, Lurianic Kabbalah deals with the reparation of an anthropomorphic supernal structure, whose particles fell and should be returned by performing the rituals in order to reconstitute the shattered divine *anthropos*. The line between the Lurianic ideas he read in Scholem’s *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, and his interpretation is a fine one, given the fact that Scholem himself used the term reintegration in his studies.⁹² Nevertheless, Eliade’s formulation here is much closer to the famous Christian formula of *restitutio rerum ad integrum*, some form of *apokatastasis*, than to the logic of Lurianic Kabbalah.⁹³ In any case, in Lurianic Kabbalah the *tiqqun* is basically a cosmic event triggered by daily ritual activity, and not a final reintegration of the human in the totality. The fallen divine spark does not lose its identity when it ascends back to its pristine place, but rather it completes the supernal anthropomorphic structure, which is not undetermined or chaotic but rather quite structured. Eliade also vaguely applied the formula *restitutio ad integrum* to the manner in which he imagined that he will deal with his wife Nina, perhaps expressing his responsibility for her abortion in 1933, carried out due to Eliade’s request.⁹⁴

A similar case of misinterpretation is related to Eliade’s view of a certain ancient custom during the Jewish Day of Atonement, *Yom Kippur*, as a possible evidence for an orgy on this day, during which sexual relations are in fact forbidden.⁹⁵ Indeed, the original mistake may not be Eliade’s, but Raffaele Pettazzoni’s⁹⁶, a revered scholar of religion who influenced

92 See Wasserstrom, *ibidem*, p. 38.

93 Though such a view is found in other contexts in earlier Kabbalah, it is not related to the specific type of Kabbalah committed to writing in the books attributed to Isaac Luria. See Gershom Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, tr. A. Arkush, ed. R.J. Zwi Werblowsky, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, JPS, Philadelphia, 1989), p. 300 note 201.

94 See *Autobiography*, I, p. 277, and *Jurnalul portughez*, I, p. 274. This was also the case of Sorana Topa. For Eliade’s application of another important concept of his vision of religion, the camouflaged sacred, to Nina, see my “Camouflaged Sacred.”

95 See M. Eliade, *Cosmos and History, The Myth of the Eternal Return*, tr. Willard R. Trask, (Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1959), p. 61.

96 See his *La confessione dei peccati*, (Bologna, 1935), II, p. 229. However, scholars in the field, who explored this topic in a detailed manner, did not

Eliade since youth. However, the result is the same: by assembling material from secondary sources according to a certain hermeneutical grid, without being aware of the cultural milieu and conceptual context, a less than convincing theory is suggested, without attempting to go into detail. A strong conviction combined with exegetical ingenuity of descriptions found in the writings of other scholars, conspired in a selective reading that created a totalizing understanding of religion, based on the belief in totality, on the possibility of an experience of totalisation and reintegration. In many cases, what should have been demonstrated by a careful analysis was assumed as self-evident. This loose approach to texts and their “messages” is quintessential for construing a more comprehensive vision of religion as unified despite its innumerable variants through history.

In this context, it is good to reflect to what extent a statement regarding the yogian experience is more than an imposition of the more general attitude to religion, on a topic that may be understood without those assumptions. In his book on Yoga, in a discussion where the androgyne interpretation of this practice started, we read:

“It is the coincidence of time and eternity, of *bhava* and *nirvana*: on the purely “human” place, it is the reintegration of the primordial androgyne, the conjunction, in one’s being, of male and female – in a word the reconquest of the completeness that precedes all creation. In short, this nostalgia for the primordial completeness and bliss is what animates and informs all the techniques that lead to the *coincidentia oppositorum* in one’s own being.”⁹⁷

find any vestige of an orgiastic dimension of such a practice during *Yom Kippur*. See, e.g., Pinchas (Paul) Mandel, “‘There were no good days to Israel as 15th of Av and *Yom ha-Kippurim*’, On the Last Mishnah of the *Massekhet Ta’anit* and its Metamorphoses,” *Te’udah*, vol. 11, eds. M.B. Lerner – M.A. Friedmann, (Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, 1986), pp. 147-178, especially the bibliographical material discussed on pp. 148-149 note 5 (Hebrew). One of the theories regarding the text referred by Pettazzoni is that it is an error and instead of *Yom ha-Kippurim* it should be read *Yom ha-Bikkurim*.

97 *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom*, pp. 271-272. This form of interpretation is, however, much more substantial in the Eranos lecture. See *Eranos Jahrbuch*, 1958, pp. 231-235. For the view that the practice of mandala strives to reintegrate the personality see the interpretation of Giuseppe Tucci, *Théorie et pratique du mandala* tr. H.J. Maxwell, (Fayard, Paris, 1974), pp. 29-53, 110-111, 113. Eliade was well-acquainted with Tucci and his writings. See also Wasserstrom, *Religion after Religion*, p. 205.

The totalizing phrase “all the techniques,” that points to much more than to the Yoga practice, is significant. This time the “all” that refers to the technique assumes a homogenous effect to be attained by different techniques. Mentioning “tantric orgy” in this context is interesting.⁹⁸ This shows that even when dealing with an example of the one male to one female, Eliade resorts to the term “orgy.” Again, the concept of reintegration and of primordial completeness, to which *coincidentia oppositorum* has been added, are projected on a religious thought-structure, which Eliade did not describe like this previously: these concepts are missing from Eliade’s essays on Yoga and its psychology and philosophy, which were printed in Romanian during 1930.⁹⁹ So as also in the somewhat biased interpretation of the concept of *Tiqqun*, discussed above, there are no technical terms in the material that is interpreted that reflect the concepts introduced by Eliade. The deep significance of terms and practices is interpreted strongly according to an assumption not explicitly found in the interpreted material. Such a hermeneutic practice assumes that the scholar knows something that is not explicit in the interpreted text, and he is capable of explicating it by resorting to this knowledge.

A reading of Eliade’s work written during his stay in Portugal shows that he was infatuated with the concept of totality, as we can see in one of his essays on Mihail Eminescu and in his *A Big Man*, where the protagonist, a rapidly growing man, who became a giant, a macranthropos¹⁰⁰, is asked what he sees while in the new state, and he exclaims: *Totul este*, “All is.”¹⁰¹ At the very end of the 1942 version of his essay on androgyny found in *The Myth of Reintegration*, Eliade writes:

98 See *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom*, p. 272, which precisely repeats here what he wrote in another context in *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, pp. 419-420.

99 See the series of articles printed in Romanian journals in 1930 and collected recently in *Mircea Eliade, Yoga, Problematika filozofiei indiene*, eds., C. Barbu – M. Handoca (Editura Mariana, Craiova, 1991), especially pp. 85-110.

100 On this term see *Eranos Jahrbuch* 1958, pp. 228-229, and in his commentary on the legend *Mesterul Manole*, written in Lisbon in 1942/1943, cf., the edition of his essays in *Mesterul Manole* printed by Petru and Magda Ursache, (Junimea, Iasi, 1992), p. 106.

101 See *Jurnalul portughez* II, p. 448. For additional references tototalisation see also *ibidem*, vol. I, pp. 102, 271.

“Finally, in order to underscore the fact that every individual, with his will or without it, bears in his soul the nostalgia of perfection, it is incumbent to say that even the essential act of love brings about an experience – naturally very pale – of androgyny.”¹⁰²

This generalization, based on the assumption that the state of androgyny indeed fascinates every individual, and that love — in Romanian *dragoste*, probably meaning sex as well — turns into a technique to attain it, indeed reflects Eliade’s rather simplistic style. The conviction that what he says is generally correct for many other religious phenomena, which he does not even mention, even if sometimes in a weaker sense. He believes in some form of “nostalgia for androgyny” that is inherent in love.¹⁰³ However, this is just an impression, one hardly plausible for such a complex feeling. Eliade deemed this alleged “absolute reality” encountered in the so-called paradisiacal state, related to an experience of androgyny, to be supportable but for a very short time in mere mortals.¹⁰⁴ Thus, the ideal of androgyny, and rituals of androgynization, became a symbol for a more complex longing for origins, for perfections of the beginnings and for nostalgias for Paradise.¹⁰⁵ All this is part of a reevaluation of archaism as an alternative to the Hegelian, developmental, much more philosophical propensities of modern European thought.¹⁰⁶ Eliade saw such a state or feeling as an aspiration or an ideal, both

102 *The Myth of Reintegration*, in *Drumul spre centru*, p. 387. I did not find a parallel to this assessment in other versions of this essay.

103 *Ibidem*. This approach is much less visible in the version in *Eranos Jahrbuch* 1958. It should be pointed out that the Italian translation of Elemire Zolla’s book on the visual representations of the androgyne, entitled *Androgyne: The Fusion of the Sexes (Art & Imagination)*, (Thames and Hudson, London, 1981), is *L’Androgino, l’umana nostalgia dell’interezza* (Red Edizione, Como, 1989), namely *The Androgyne: the Human Nostalgia for Perfection*, a title that betrays the impact of Eliade. On the androgyne according to Zolla, Jung and Eliade see also my “Androgynes: Reflections on the Study of Religion,” in *Labirinti della mente. Visioni del mondo. Il lascito intellettuale di Elemire Zolla nel XXI secolo* ed. Grazia Marchianò (Florence, 2012), pp. 17-48.

104 *The Myth of Reintegration*, in *Drumul spre centru*, pp. 386-387.

105 See Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, (Harper, New York, etc., 1975), pp. 50-53 and his *Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries*, pp. 59-72. For “Adamic nostalgia” see his *The Quest, History and Meaning in Religion* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, London, 1969), pp. 99-101, 134.

106 On Eliade as archaist versus Hegelianism in the scholarship on religion see M. Idel, *Enchanted Chains, Techniques and Rituals in Jewish Mysticism*,

in the past and in the present. Following the leads of the European occultists or esoterists, who in turn were influenced to a certain extent by Jewish and Christian Kabbalah, Eliade turned to the times of beginning rather than to end-time, as the period of a lost but retrievable type of perfection, with spiritual androgyny being one of its most important features. Thus different and diverging religious phenomena like Yoga, Shamanism, archaic orgies, and even “love,” have all been enlisted to Eliade’s search for techniques of reintegration or “going back”¹⁰⁷ that have a strong erotic component, and are interpreted as related to the reconstitution of androgyny. Sometimes these techniques are related to, or identified with, experiences of initiation.

These scholarly preconceptions, gravitating on the centrality of a homogenous vision of religion, represented by the frequent resort to the term “all” and “primordial totality,” which started relatively early in his career, are based, to a great extent, on some even earlier personal propensities as to what were his human ideals, *biographica*, and they are obvious also in his *literaria*. These terms explain little, and the assumption that people were striving to reach an undifferentiated state of being or consciousness, by reintegration is to my mind unfounded. But Eliade’s biography supplies us with the reasons for this move, life with more than one woman at the same time, the confessions about orgies, real or imaginary, and more than all, the phallogentric and strongly masculine-oriented approach in the two versions of *Apology for Virility*. This strong sexually-oriented approach to the experience of the totality was formulated in his *literaria*, and only later, since 1938, was it imported and elaborated in his *academica*.¹⁰⁸ After it was

(Cherub Press, Los Angeles, 2005), pp. 4-6.

107 See Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, pp. 79-84.

108 For Eliade’s view that in religion sexual images and sexual activity in general mean much more than they do in a modern profane society, namely a form of worship of the power of creation and procreation, see his 1934 essay “Sex” printed in *Oceanography*, pp. 93-101. He returns to these ideas as to the significance of the sexual symbolism many times later on. I cannot enter here the question why Eliade did not understand the alchemical practices as androgyny in his earlier essays on the topic, printed in 1935, 1937, and 1938, the first two reprinted in *Drumul spre centru*, pp. 464-504, despite the recurring resort to a sexualized vision of alchemy. However since 1942 this claim occurs in Romanian, *Drumul spre centru*, pp. 371-372, French, *Eranos Jahrbuch* 1958, p. 198, and the English, *The Two and the One*, p. 103, versions, but not in his later formulations of his views on alchemy in *The Forge and the Crucible*, despite a reproduction of the pictures where the androgyny is found, see pp. 58-59, 138. Despite Eliade’s refraining from

formulated academically, the search for the ontological totality and an experience of totalisation was applied, again, in literary writings, like *The Bridge* and *A Big Man*, and sometimes to the manner in which he understood his biography, in times of historical or nervous crises since the forties. This circular move between Eliade's various literary corpora, which nourish each other alongside Eliade's life, is in my opinion characteristic of his *oeuvre* in general, more than any other scholar of religion I am acquainted with, including those who resorted to the concept of androgyny as representing an important type of perfection, like Henry Corbin and E.R. Wolfson, for example. The more conceptual problem related to Eliade's discussions of the androgyne and the terms used to explicate it, is the ambiguity as to the status of central concepts like totality and reintegration from an ontological point of view. It is not clear whether the different expressions of "totality" point to a shared reality, or whether they are simply expressions of similar thoughts. I am inclined to the view that Eliade's position was closer to the former suggestion, at least in the first decades of his academic career. Such an assumption also implies the belief in the efficacy of the techniques to reach reintegration, and in the case of Eliade the resort to Yoga while in India on the one hand, and to orgies while in Portugal, should be understood as part of such an attitude which attributes objective, rather than subjective status to the attainment of the individuals. However, while Eliade saw in the orgiastic experiences an attempt at reaching some form of inner equilibrium, he did not explicitly claim that he was looking for, or attained inadvertently, a state of androgyny.

There is a tension between Eliade's very early claims as to the priority of masculinity as distinct from femininity, on the one hand and the imperative to absorb the feminine element in the experience of the male in order to attain some form of androgyny, and thus perfection after 1940, on the other.¹⁰⁹ In any case, I was not able to find either a literary piece of writing gravitating around the ideal of androgyny, or a self-perception of Eliade himself as having

introducing the category of androgyny in his studies on alchemy, he claims he did so in his studies on androgyny mentioned in this footnote.

109 As to Wasserstrom's claim in *Religion after Religion*, p. 204, that Eliade's ideal was a masculine androgyne, "throughout his long career" is not so obvious from his own sources as I know them. See now the way in which Ioan P. Culianu described Eliade as a seemingly androgyne, in the text printed by Liviu Bordas, 'Always a Beacon Light in a Nihilistic World'. Mircea Eliade and Ioan Petru Culianu – documentary contributions," *Studii de istorie a filosofiei rominesti*, vol. VIII (Bucharest, 2012), pp. 308, 334 (in Romanian).

experienced something similar to androgyny. Despite the methodological claim made at the very beginning of the present study as to the affinities between Eliade's *academica*, *biografica* and *literaria*, which holds true for many details dealt with above, especially totality and integration, androgyny is not such a unifying concept, despite its centrality for Eliade's *academica* in most of its stages, even if we do not interpret it metaphorically. At least in this case, he did not interpret details of his life in accordance with categories that emerged later on in his scholarship of religion. In my opinion, we may regard the discovery of the relevance of androgyny as the result of finding a concrete symbol for his more vague pursuits, which were formulated in terms that are not found in archaic religious. In a way, the category of the androgyne, especially as discussed in the study of Krappe printed in 1938, helped Eliade in organizing some of his more general inclinations in a more specific manner. This shift from the many cases in which he resorted to the concepts of totality, primordiality and reintegration, without mentioning the androgyne, took place sometime in 1938, as we may learn from Eliade's 1937 review of Paul Mus's monograph on the temple of Barabudur, where these terms occur many times, save that of androgyne.¹¹⁰ In a 1974 essay, when all the early categories appear together, androgyny is not mentioned either.¹¹¹ The more elaborate introduction of the androgyne in 1940 as reflecting a particular form of integration into the totality is thus less the result of analyzing religious texts and specific examples, but much more the insight that there is a possibility to exemplify his more comprehensive trend toward totalisation, which was already central to his earlier views.¹¹²

A late comer, in comparison to the concepts of "all," "totality" and reintegration, Eliade's concept of androgyny was dramatically informed by the centrality he attributed to these earlier concepts, while it has informed them much less. Moreover, Eliade's personal writings or his literary work does not refer to it. In his academic corpus, Eliade strove to persuade his readers as to the centrality of the myth of reintegration and later on of that of the androgyne, and some scholars have been convinced by his approach. In my opinion, his discussions are often quite impressionistic, rarely a

110 Reprinted in *Drumul spre centru*, pp. 185, 195-197.

111 See "Some Observations on European Witchcraft," reprinted in *Occultism*, pp. 87-92.

112 See Eliade's own testimony that he arrived to the vision of the duality and reintegration related to Goethe's *Faust* and Balzac's *Serafita*, twenty years earlier, namely after 1937, since he wrote his confession around 1957. See *Eranos Jahrbuch*, 1958, p. 195.

convincing argument has been advanced based on detailed and sustained analyses. The reliance on the validity and the relevance of his personal experiences, diminishes the importance of the detailed analyses of specific texts and cultures first in themselves, and allows the combination of personal experiences in the present with the archaic pre-philosophical speculations of the past as if all are reflecting the same underlying form of religious experience or concept. Thus, sometimes Eliade reinterpreted episodes in his own life as constituting some form of experiencing a more “authentic” religion, and a partaking a search for perfection. Nevertheless, an androgyne he did not consider himself. As Ithamar Gruenwald appropriately remarked in connection to Eliade, “it is always easier to speculate on meaning and symbolism than it is to investigate – and then assess.”¹¹³

113 See his *Rituals and Ritual Theory in Ancient Israel*, (Leiden, Brill, 2003), pp. 81-82 n. 48.