

A Diachronic Study of Ontological Perspectives from Mircea Eliade and Ioan Petru Culianu's Literary and Scientific works: the Acceptance of "The Other"

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Abstract: The aim of this article is to show the fact that there is a continuity of ideas between Mircea Eliade and Ioan Petru Culianu's systems of thought. Mircea Eliade is fascinated with the power of active imagination, illustrated by myths and symbols which are typical of collective unconscious, because they have been used from the beginning of this world up to the contemporary world. However, we can find such representations in Mircea Eliade and Ioan Petru Culianu's both scientific and literary works. The comparative interdisciplinary approach is used in this article. On the one hand, there is the comparison between Mircea Eliade and Ioan Petru Culianu's systems of thought and on the other hand, the interdisciplinary approach arises from the connections established between various sciences, like: the history of religions, anthropology, philosophy and natural sciences. The similarities and differences between their systems of thought are illustrated in this article. Firstly, the description of Mircea Eliade's scientific system includes the diachronic study of religious ideas and the emphasis on human active imagination as a mechanism of compensation for the ontological suffering. Secondly, the principles of the universal method belonging to Ioan Petru Culianu, the mythical and symbolic representations from the Romanian writer's literary works: *The Emerald Game* and *Hesperus* are also illustrated in this article. Researchers in the philological field can use both the comparative interdisciplinary approach in their future activity and the premise of continuity between Mircea Eliade and his disciple's systems of thought. Apart from the main approach and premise of this article, the original perspective is represented by the mythical and symbolic representations from Ioan Petru Culianu's science fiction novel entitled *Hesperus*.

Keywords: archetype; collective unconscious; the sacred; liberation; antiquity

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1. The Diachronic Study of Religious Ideas – The Acceptance of “The Other”

Spirituality is the main characteristic of Mircea Eliade’s works, apart from its influence in his actions of cultural reform, by means of “The 1930th Generation”. The theoretical points from his well-known scientific work, entitled: *The History of Religious Ideas* offer a new way to interpret human existence, by means of bringing together a lot of different cultural and religious points of view, an approach which is similar to Camil Petrescu’s “Pluri-Perspectivism” in the Romanian literature, and also by means of the possibility to interpret Mircea Eliade’s literary works like the works of an encyclopedia personality, with an intellectual standard, as historian of universal religions.

1.1. The Active Imagination of the Human Being as a Mechanism of Compensation for the Ontological Suffering

Mircea Eliade is fascinated with the power of active imagination, which is typical of the traditional and mythical human being and the writer would like to create a history which proves the authenticity of archaic vision upon life and the change of spiritual ideas throughout time. At this level, Mircea Eliade’s purpose in the *Preface* of the book is “before everything, to show what happened during the exterior, unholy and profane time, using the force of intuition, experience, religious ideas which contributed to the form of current human condition, from prehistory up to the beginning of our era.” (Eliade, 2011, p. 10). In other words, the Romanian writer returns to his vision from the work entitled *Images and symbols*, represented by the fact that the human being should live in the profane or exterior time, aware of the second time dimension, that is the sacred or interior time, because the last one could not be preserved as the sole form of temporal structure, and unfortunately, this is a limit of human freedom. However, the distinction between the sacred and the profane is typical of the ephemeral, limited human being among other creatures. For instance, the Romanian author appreciates that “the study of Dante or Shakespeare, but also of Dostoievski or Proust” (Eliade, 2011, p. 11) is clarified by the knowledge of various sacred symbols, because, from Mircea Eliade’s point of view, the goal of a historian who deals with religions is “to illustrate the perfect camouflage of the sacred principle, by means of identifying it with the profane.” (Eliade, 2011, p. 12).

1.2. “The Interpretations’ Game” through the Symbol’s Pluralism

In this point, we think it is absolutely necessary to clarify the “symbol” term. From Gilbert Durand’s perspective, the author of the work entitled *The anthropological structures of the imaginary*, the symbol starts from the signifier, the visual image of a concept and leads to an infinite number of interpretations which are associated with the visual representation of the concept. If we remember Camil Petrescu’s vision upon the infinite world, which is impossible to understand by means of a rational approach to it, because it always evolves, the multiple interpretations which are associated with the sacred symbols from Mircea Eliade’s literary works have the aim to clarify, in accordance with the features of the sacred principle, which “shows up, but at the same time, hiddens itself, showing camouflage”, the transcendental or metaphysical experience and the ontological condition of the human being.

Another argument that certifies the importance of religions’ study by means of a historical perspective and of Mircea Eliade’s complementary literary works is that every occurrence or appearance of the sacred principle is important: the ritual, the myth, faith, the divine figure, human experience, because “to be or rather to become means to be religious.” (Eliade, 2011, p. 10). Not accidentally, the Romanian writer emphasizes in his work entitled *The Sacred and The Profane*, the experience of the traditional individual, seen as *homo religiosus*, who is the fundamental reference point and guides himself after the visual representations of “The World’s Center” and Divinity. Moreover, the aim to write on a piece of paper every experience reminds us of Camil Petrescu’s novel technique from *The Bed of Procust*, but, meanwhile, it introduces the possibility to see, beyond profane and usual experience or common symbols, the profoundness of reality and the sacred interpretation.

For example, the first chapter of Mircea Eliade’s encyclopedical work illustrates the mythical behavior of prehistoric community, which shows the power of *a priori* symbolic imagination and native intelligence. The Romanian author reminds us the examples of “fire taming” and the relation between the hunter and the victim. At this point, Mircea Eliade believes there is a “mystical connection” which can be applied both to the living creatures and the human being as well. In other words, Mircea Eliade considers that symbolic representations are immanent in human conscience, due to the fact that prehistoric individual used them in order to face life. “*Homo faber* (m.n – the one who does) was at one point: *homo ludens* (m.n. – the one who faces life by means of the active imagination’s game), *homo sapiens* (m.n. – the one who knows) and last but not least, *homo religiosus* (m.n. – the one that lives with the perception of the sacred or religious principle, anchored in the profane, usual or daily

dimension of time).” (Eliade, 2011, p. 25). Moreover, Mircea Eliade’s disciple, Ioan Petru Culianu recognizes the contemporary perpetual function of mythical archetypes and believes that the archetype represents “an ancient prototype of everything that exists in the actual world. For the traditional individual, a thing or a deed is not important unless it repeats a primordial action, such as the Creation of the World.” (Culianu, 1994-1998, p. 49)

Furthermore, Mircea Eliade’s both short stories and novels include in their surface structure a lot of symbols and mythical themes, and their interpretation requires a complex study of the text’s deep structure. If we keep in mind the obligatory and involuntary presence of symbols in the literary works, *in genere*, a feature which is seen as the result of individual active imagination, as Ioan Petru Culianu notices in one of his works: “The symbol intervenes in an author’s literary work even without his wish.” (Culianu, 1994-1998, p. 57), the particularity of Mircea Eliade’s works is the circularity of mythical images and symbols, by means of allowing them to appear in all his works, that the variety of a symbol’s interpretations is always brought up-to-date.

An important aspect that we should mention is the strange nature of the interpretations attributed to the symbolic and mythical images, because a mythical symbol can send the reader to divergent, even completely different or opposed interpretations, so as the reader of Mircea Eliade’s works uses his/her active and symbolic imagination to choose one option from the variety of interpretations or he/she can keep all the possible alternatives. However, this “coincidence of opposites” or the complementarity principle shows, in the last analysis, the limit of the ephemeral human being who unfortunately moves away from the Truth whenever he/she seems to get closed to it. Still, the same principle of the opposites’ harmonization is used as the fundamental technique to explain the world’s organisation and principles. The most relevant examples at this level are the oppositions between the sacred and the profane, the masculine and the feminine, explanatory features which are seen as the basis of world’s organisation and principles. In Mircea Eliade’s encyclopedical work, an example which explains the plurality of interpretations attributed to a symbol and “unity of opposites” is the funeral tradition. From the traditional individual’s point of view, it is relevant the faith in life after death, even though it will be a spiritual existence afterwards, or the burial is done, because people would like to avoid returning in this world. As a result, we can notice that such beliefs and symbolic interpretations can be found in

contemporary world as well, but under different forms, due to some historical changes.

What Mircea Eliade wants to emphasize in his work entitled *The History of Religious Ideas* is the fact that the ontological representations of the traditional human being, by means of the sacred principle, active imagination and symbolic representations have not got lost nowadays, but they have amplified themselves, under the influence of the native visual representation ability. Even if the mechanisms of world's representation by means of mythical images and symbols have secularized nowadays, as Mircea Eliade noticed in his work entitled *Images and symbols*, every time an apparently inexplicable event happens to the contemporary individual, he/she should be the phenomenon's explanation in the mythical representations of the surrounding world and major events, all of them belonging to the traditional human being. Moreover, symbolic representations of the world have amplified themselves throughout time, by means of the intercultural exchange between mentalities, ideas, cultural visions, which represents the approach that Mircea Eliade uses in his theoretical writings. This method does not reduce knowledge, because active imagination, which is typical of human nature and makes the multiplication of symbols and their afferent interpretations possible, reminds the human being, through *anamnesis*, the necessity to permanently relate to the mythical substratum of symbols and interpretations. In other words, the diverse representations of active imagination are not anything else than the reflex of mythical representations.

In order to show the relevance of the traditional human being's thought in explaining the way our human brain works, by means of mythical representations of the world, Mircea Eliade provides the example of an ancient civilization that perceived the "earth" element as a symbol of the feminine principle, as Terra Mater, and people showed a lot of respect for it, as if it was their mother. Moreover, the bridge was seen as the terrestrial answer of the rainbow or as a transcendental symbol which made the connection with the world beyond, "The World's Center" was also respected in the prehistoric, traditional world "the magic fly", which was the symbol of height, was perceived as a way to free themselves from the burden, and it was the starting point of the fascination with gods, spirits and civilizing heroes. As we see it, if we bring all these prehistoric symbolic representations of the world together, we can say that the starting point of humanity shows an apparently limited universe, but which is full of important symbolic interpretations, with the aim of integrating the human being in the infinite world.

From our point of view, another relevant example that shows the importance of symbolic representations in an individual's life is the Indian faith which is well presented in *The History of Religious Ideas* and moreover, Mircea Eliade was fascinated with its features. In the Indian thought, the spiritual philosophy is full of symbolic representations which have the supreme purpose of liberation. *The Upanishads* learn us how to free themselves from the results of our actions or deeds: "Because any religious and profane deed (*karman*) amplifies and perpetuates transmigration (*samsāra*), liberation cannot be won neither by sacrifice, nor by tight connection with gods, asceticism or goodness. (...) The fact that people do not know the mysteries of sacrifice is what sentenced individuals to second death, if we maintain the perspective of ancient Indian texts." (Eliade, 2011, pp. 219-220). Mircea Eliade believes that in the Indian culture, this illusory knowledge leads to the destruction of ignorance (*āvidyā*), which seems to be the typical feature of uninitiated individuals. However, we can encounter a similar perception upon life in Plato's philosophical system, whose "Myth of the Cave" conveys the idea that we know the exterior, illusory world by means of our deceptive senses, and as a result, human beings are characterized by features like: delusion and metaphysical ignorance. Because of this metaphysical ignorance, individuals lead an irresponsible existence, ignoring the results of their deeds (*karman*). At the level of Indian spirituality, Mircea Eliade notices that ignorance (*āvidyā*) creates or amplifies the law of cause and effect (*karman*) which, in turn, produces an uninterrupted series of reincarnations (*samsāra*). The key of liberation from this vicious circle is represented by *Bhagavad – Gīta*, dated back to the IVth century, which advises us to live our life without putting emphasis on the results of our profane deeds.

The discovery of this fatal chain: *āvidyā – karman – samsāra*, the salvation by means of gnosis and metaphysical knowledge (*vidyā*), able to reveal the structure of real world - which is the merit of *The Upanishads* - is the main aspect of later Indian philosophy. The most important discoveries refer to ways of liberation and the agent or the person destined to enjoy this complex process of liberation.

A new vision upon the way of connecting the individual to the great universal energy is the identity between *ātman* and *brahman*, where Brahman is the symbol of the entire world: "Life is his body, light is his shape, and space is his soul." (Eliade, 2011, p. 221). Like every symbol, which has contradictory interpretations, *Brahman* is, paradoxically, and at the same time, "the *ātman* from my heart, smaller than a barley seed or a grain of mustard and still, bigger than earth or atmosphere; finally, bigger than all these "worlds". It contains all our deeds and wishes, the whole world;

this is the *ātman* from my heart, this is *Brahman*. When I leave this world, I will be a piece of him.” (Eliade, 2011, p. 221). We can finally infer that *Brahman* is the center of great cosmic life energy which is appropriated by the human being through *ātman* and moreover, he is the means by which the individual can become eternal: “By death, the *ātman* of “the one who knows” makes a unit with *Brahman*. The souls of the ignorant ones will follow the law of transmigration (*samsāra*).” (Eliade, 2011, p. 221). At this level, Mircea Eliade mentions in his theoretical works that it is important for the individual to know the purpose of *Bhagavad-Gīta*, that the human being should live in the profane historical time, thinking of the sacred Great Time, in order to find the way to the ontological center and to the lost paradisiacal state. Furthermore, Mircea Eliade expresses the fact that the union of *ātman* with *Brahman* Universal Being is “an impersonal immortality” and the self makes a unit with its original source, *Brahman*, and as a result, the transhistorical nature of the human being is preserved. In the theoretical work entitled *Images and symbols*, Mircea Eliade states that immortality is not accessible to the human being, because his/her efforts are not oriented towards this goal and the author provides the example of *Parsifal and The Fisher King* myth, whose protagonists know the precious source of The Grail, which is the World’s and the Individual’s Center and has the power to revive the primordial Lost Paradise whenever it is reminded.

The symbol of *ātman* is completed by a metaphorical association with the light or the Sun, a fact which opens a new interpretation of Lucian Blaga’s *Poems of Light*. *Ātman* is assimilated to the light or the Sun and it becomes the symbol of paradisiacal life: “The light that brights beyond the sky, in the highest “worlds” is the light that shines from the individual’s heart, as a “heart light”. This serene being that is born from the human being’s body and touches the highest light appears in its own shape. It is *ātman*. It is immortal, the one who is afraid of nothing. It is *Brahman*.” (Eliade, 2011, p. 222). Indian faith shapes the individual as an inexhaustible source of inner resources and this complex ontological condition should be known and reminded, by means of *anamnesis*, in every existential situation. Moreover, Indian spirituality shapes the human being after the prototype of eternal cosmic world, by means of the dichotomy between *ātman* and *Brahman*, the transhistorical condition of the human being and his/her power of decision. Finally, liberation or detachment from the illusory veil of *Māya* can be achieved by means of Yoga meditation techniques. By doing this, the individual becomes aware of the universal Spirit’s omnipresence (*Brahman*) in everything (*ātman*).

Furthermore, Indian philosophy is characterized by anticipatory attributes and it is considered that the world's decay is gradually taking place, in four distinct stages called "the four *yugas*". Firstly, as Mircea Eliade appreciates in his writing entitled *Images and symbols*, number four expresses entirety, perfection and plenitude, in the same way that in Christianity, number seven epitomizes the stages of spiritual fulfilment, in accordance with the Genesis' pattern. In the Indian culture, as we go further in time, the moral order of the Universe, *dharma* is gradually minimized. If *kṛta-yuga* period is the Golden Age that brings the primordial paradisiacal beatitude back, *tretā-yuga* shows, by its name, the individual's respect for only three quarters of *dharma*, and as a result, hard work, suffering and death become attributes of humanity. *Dvāpara-yuga* shows the half preservation of universal energy *dharma* and it represents the period when misfortunes and bad habits are rapidly growing and human life is getting shorter and shorter. Finally, *kalī-yuga*, on the other hand, illustrates the fission of matter, spirit and human being, by emphasizing the pleasure gained from owning materialistic values and from dissipation. However, the aim of this existential cycle (*mahā-yuga*), followed by a dissolution (*prālaya*) is to underline the creation – destruction – new creation archetype which is constantly repeated in nature, by means of the New Year's Eve rituals and at the ontological level, through the necessity to detach from the profane time, in the favor of the cosmic time, whenever the universal energies have finished.

In Antic China, the endless life techniques have as their core aspect the reunion of the two epiphanies, represented by *yang*, which is matter, life and *yin*, that symbolizes spirit and death. As we being in other cultural systems, presented by Mircea Eliade in his encyclopedical work, *The History of Religious Ideas*, there is the belief in the identity and correspondence between cosmos and human body, because vital forces and energies circulate through the nine body orifices that need to be supervised by means of "feeding organs with food and medicinal plants that contain specific energies" (Eliade, 2011, p. 37), in order to drive demons away. As in Indian Yoga, the breathing process has a very important function: "By means of a good insight and mind concentration, the human being can visualize his/her breathing and can lead it towards the three "fields": brain, heart zone and the one under the navel." (Eliade, 2011, p. 37). Moreover, if we make the connection between this cultural presentation of the breathing process and its fictional representation, we can notice that the breathing technique - which makes both the human equilibrium and the transcendental human condition possible – is described in Mircea Eliade's literary work entitled *The Secret of dr. Honigberger*, through the

example of Dr. Zerlendi as the protagonist who stops making connections with his family and friends by integrating in totally new ontological dimension.

2. The Principles of the Universal Method (*mathesis universalis*) belonging to “The Last Culianu”

We emphasize the opposition between the works of “the first Culianu” and the complex writings of “the last Culianu”. However, the works belonging to “the last Culianu” are the epitome of initial principles and genius’ revelation that would have caused “the final transcendental censorship” represented by his physical disappearance. In this point, one should remember Lucian Blaga’s concept of “transcendental censorship”, as Horia Roman Patapievici informs us in his work entitled *The Last Culianu* where the distinction between “the first Culianu” and “the last Culianu” can also be found.

On the other hand, Mircea Eliade’s disciple, Ioan Petru Culianu or reunites in his scientific works a lot of ontological perspectives, both spiritual, as we have already seen in his master’s case and profane, scientific or “paradisiacal”, if we use the well-known philosophical concept that belongs to the Romanian writer Lucian Blaga. From our point of view, on the one hand, Mircea Eliade’s research is organized around the obscure, mysterious existential aspects which are analyzed by means of philosophy and religion, thus illustrating “the luciferian knowledge”. At this level, as Lucian Blaga’s philosophical system informs us, the cryptic part of the element we want to discover is infinitely multiplying and as a result, mystery is specific to every human action. On the other hand, Ioan Petru Culianu’s study of universal enigmas is a mixture of these two types of knowledge, presented by the Romanian writer and philosopher, Lucian Blaga: Firstly, “the Luciferian knowledge” is illustrated by Ioan Petru Culianu’s wish to explain the world’s mysteries through spiritual intercultural dialogue, and secondly, “the paradisiacal knowledge” results from the intertextuality between his works and various discoveries of scientists, like: “Among the names that sounds familiar to me (m.n. – in Pietro’s library from *The Emerald Game* novel): Ptolemeus, Roger Bacon, Robert Grossetesti, Lincoln’s bishop... (...) The collection was made of a mixture between old and new. I have seen the Alfraganus’ *Elements of astronomy*, Abraham ben Chija’s *Sphera Mundi*, Peurbach’s work entitled *Theoricae novae planetarum*, Averroes’ comment concerning Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*.” (Culianu, 2011, pp. 38-39). Not accidentally, one chapter from *The Emerald Game* novel, entitled *The Secret of The Three Graces*

includes not only spiritual references, like: “*The Rituals’ Book, Sepher Raziel*, the famous *Picatrix, Demons’ Domination* by Saint Cyprian, *Pentacles* and an anonymous work, entitled *The Structure of Names and Malefic Spirits’ Signs*” (Culianu, 2011, pp. 34-35), but also astrological works, such as: “*The little astrological mirror* by Marsala, *The Book of Saturn’ perfection* by Saint Cyprian” (Culianu, 2011, pp. 34-35), and there are also some mathematical references in his library, such as: *Vergilius’ mathematical art*, all of them individualizing Ioan Petru Culianu’s system of world’s interpretation in the Romanian culture. Moreover, the combination between scientific and religious aspects becomes obvious when Ioan Petru Culianu tries to identify the cause of Renaissance sciences’ disappearance. However, it is well-known that the cultural Renaissance movement is perceived by collective unconscious as a creative revolution, a human spirit’s revelation or a period of redefining a new individual, with profound intellectual concerns, as the writer himself describes in one of his works entitled *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance*: “European scientific revolution is that lead to the disappearance of Renaissance sciences is based on religious factors which have no connection with the essence of sciences. Religion also determines European societies to take part in a risky adventure whose consequences we cannot ever estimate.” (Culianu, 2011, pp. 34-35).

The diversity of Ioan Petru Culianu’s ontological perspectives throughout time involves: Gnosticism, dualistic mythologies, the soul’s ecstasy and ascent, Renaissance magic and philosophy, the principle of natural elements’ chain, by means of cosmic reunion and anthropomorphism, and the connection between spirit, soul and body.

At the level of the harmony between spirit, soul and body, typical of the human being’s inner reality, Ioan Petru Culianu notices the necessity of a beneficial, stimulating energy called “vital pneumatic force” that circulates through human body’s arteries or “Spirit”, which has the power to keep soul and body working: “Everything can be reduced to communication issue: soul and body speak not only two distinct or incompatible languages, but also inaudible one to another. Interior sense is the one capable of hearing and understanding both, having the role to translate, in accordance with the direction of the message, one from the other.” (Culianu, 2012, p. 32).

Individual pneumatic force is extrapolated at a cosmic level and as a result, cosmic pneumatic force illustrates the same process described above. From Ioan Petru Culianu’s point of view, the human being becomes “a compendium of the cosmos”

(Culianu, 2012, p. 32) and at this point, there is also the process of “universal anthropomorphism” (Culianu, 2012, p. 32), by means of which the entire nature has not only a material form, but also a lively shape. In Ioan Petru Culianu’s system of thought, the continuity between individual and cosmic pneumatic forces is overbidden by the magic hidden powers of man.

From our perspective, Ioan Petru Culianu’s scientific writings, such as: *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance*, *The Tree of Gnosis*, *The Dualist Gnososes of the Occident*, *Iocari serio. Science and Art in the Renaissance thought* assign Renaissance the highest influence in shaping the ontological visions. The essential Renaissance aspect which is appropriated by Ioan Petru Culianu is the symbolic knowledge principle doubled by the principle of natural elements’ connection, because in the same way that Mircea Eliade believes that the sacred is omnipresent, but it constantly hides itself, Ioan Petru Culianu states that “any space object, every event is full of a spiritual meaning. The material world is the reflected light and the mirror of the intelligible world.” (Culianu, 2003, p. 39). If we analyse this statement carefully, we can notice the connection of Ioan Petru Culianu’s ideas with Plato and Aristotle’s perspectives, an aspect which determines us starting a historical analysis of philosophical perspectives upon life.

One can see that Ioan Petru Culianu’s system of thought is positive, optimistic because apart from introducing the presence of Divinity in all the universal elements: “All natural things are *vestigia* (traces) and *nutus* (signs) through which Divinity reveals to us and tries to bring us again to our first, original condition.” (Culianu, 2003, pp. 30-31), it is also illustrated the principle of natural elements’ connection, by means of which the human being can bring his/her condition to a transcendental level. Moreover, Ioan Petru Culianu takes over Marsilio Ficino’s universal pattern and this fact illustrates Romanian author’s strong belief in the power of human spirit which, due to its connection with nature, spreads itself from the soul to the human body: “The world’s machinery is built in a way that heavenly aspects have a worldly state on earth and earthly things have a celestial dignity in the sky. The process is magic. By using certain favorable moments, heavenly things can be attracted by human beings through those inferior things that take a fancy to the superior ones; and we can become friends with the transcendental level by means of celestial aspects.” (Culianu, 2003, p. 37).

As we see it, another important fact in the analysis of Ioan Petru Culianu’s system of the world’s interpretation is the value of *Dualist gnososes of the Occident*, reunited as a result of comparative and historical study in the cultural domain. The common

aspects of positive “dualist gnoses” that certify Ioan Petru Culianu’s scientific optimism are: the ecosystem intelligence, which illustrates the fact that this universe is created by a good and highly intelligent cause, and as a result, this universe is good, and the anthropic principle that introduces the commensurableness and reciprocal connection between human beings and universe. On the other hand, the pessimistic “dualist gnoses”, such as: Manichaeism, bogomilism cannot be ignored, because we can see that Ioan Petru Culianu illustrates Mircea Eliade’s “coincidence of contraries” principle. These religious beliefs are characterized by: acosmism and encratism, but the Romanian author states that it is absolutely necessary a certain “tolerance spectrum in appreciating dualism”, a fact that sends us to the fundamental essence of this article, that is the perspective of a paradisiacal, sacred, mythical and repetitive starting point, under different forms or in other words, a symbolic vision which is camouflaged under a lot of divergent or similar forms, and it represents an aspect which is illustrated by all Mircea Eliade’s literary works and shows the difficulty of an existential mystery’s profound deciphering.

Another relevant aspect at the level of historical study of ontological perspectives is the interpretation of Ioan Petru Culianu’s novel entitled *Hesperus*, whose science fiction features are not an obstacle in our way to identify the mythical and symbolic ground, as Mircea Eliade notices in one of his confessions: “It would be quite interesting to know if the knowledge of religious ideas, beliefs and techniques prepared or brought about the central theme of *Hesperus*.” (Eliade, 2012, p. 5).

3. Mythical and Symbolic Images in *The Emerald Game* Novel by Ioan Petru Culianu

The fact that shows Ioan Petru Culianu’s visionary experience can be identified in *The Emerald Game* novel because, from our perspective, the main topic that opens the book, which is the terrible accident in which the narrator’s best friend, Pietro was involved, something which occurred as a consequence of the oppressive political system or as a predestined censorship of the one who explored the science about “the mystery of the bad principle in the world” is very questionable even nowadays and as a result, we have to choose one of the following options in order to explain the tragic accident: Perhaps we should check the relevance of the assumption that the human being is the *homo faber* (the one who does everything in his/her life) or we should take into account the tragic perception upon human existence, which is shaped by a transcendental figure and as a result, it can be suppressed anytime.

The topic of Ioan Petru Culianu's novel can be interpreted starting from its foreword, which suggests the fact that the unexpected murder against Pietro, followed by a series of crimes which had been committed in order to prevent an eventual disclosure of the destructive plan against an Italian cultural community, represents that *myse en abyme*, which belongs to "a secret society perpetuated, perhaps, in its depth, up to our days." (Culianu, 2011). On the other hand, we cannot identify in Mircea Eliade's work a certain anticipation of events, because the paradigm is constantly changing, by means of the interpretations' variety which is associated with different symbols from the text.

3.1. The Preoccupation for the Architectonic Construction of Ioan Petru Culianu's Discourse, in contrast with the Modernist View of Neglecting the Narrative Form, which is only Apparently Appropriated by Mircea Eliade

From our point of view, the presence of those twenty-two chapters in case of *The Emerald Game* novel illustrates the dualist vision or the binary pattern of Genesis which perpetuates *The Gnosis' Tree* and "the interpretations' game", the one that causes existential relativism, all these aspects are included in Ioan Petru Culianu's scientific works. Similarly, at the organization level of Mircea Eliade's work *The Secret of dr. Honigberger*, if we embrace a symbolic study, the ten parts of the text epitomize the narrator's endeavor towards perfection, because he is content with the fact that he succeeded in part nine of the short story to identify the mystery of dr. Zerlendi's death: "This note was dated two days after his disappearance. If somebody had opened the manuscript and had read this page, he/she would have understood that dr. Zerlendi had still been in the house, very close to his family." (Eliade, 1999, p. 51). However, the narrator's aim to tell Miss Zerlendi the cause of her husband's death has not been achieved and this fact underlines human imperfection, because any effort to accomplish nature true perfection is in vain.

3.2. The Emerald as a Metaphor of the Human Mind

From our perspective, the title of Ioan Petru Culianu's novel: *The Emerald Game* is a metaphor of "the mind's game", in accordance with Aristotle's principles of semantic transfer and implied comparison. The emerald is constantly associated with the transparency of green color, which allows us to infer the subjective perception of the onlooker when establishing color. As the emerald is the result of a symbiosis between green and bright or dark shade, which are uncertain, Ioan Petru Culianu's knowledge epistemology shows the uncertainty of human existence.

3.3. Fire as an Anticipatory Element of a Tragic Ending

Fire is one of the vital elements, as water, air and earth are, if we follow T.S. Eliot's work *The Waste Land*, that makes purity and primordial perfection possible. However, this vision upon fire element applies both to Mircea Eliade and Ioan Petru Culianu: "- Do you feel the purifying ardor of fire? But meanwhile, too much purity is not good for us, ephemeral beings." (Culianu, 2011, p. 17). However, at this level, the ideas' convergence branches out into an interpretation opposition, in accordance with Ioan Petru Culianu's method, because even if Mircea Eliade notices the mythical repetitive purification that takes place in the profane world and establishes primordial beatitude, his disciple anticipates the tragic and negative aspect of it.

3.4. "The Frightening Doctrine of Double Truth"

Dualism can be frequently found in *The Emerald Game* novel, in order to show the validity of the dualist theory applied in the scientific world and at the level of human consciousness. "The frightening doctrine of double truth" illustrates dualism or binary system, theorized by both Mircea Eliade and Ioan Petru Culianu. On the one hand, from Mircea Eliade's point of view, oppositions occur between fundamental existential principles, such as: Good-Bad, Masculine-Feminine, Right-Left, etc. and give birth to multiple interpretations, that are different from one culture to another, but they still have some common features. On the other hand, in Ioan Petru Culianu's system of thought, each term of an initial opposition generates a new opposition and as a result, we will have an infinite chain of dichotomies, in the *p-form* number (*p-adic*) and in the end, completely opposed interpretations or "the double truth" form whose parts co-occur, in the same way that Mircea Eliade does with the "coincidence of contraries" principle: "Double truth doesn't mean there is a truth of theology and another belonging to science and they dispute each other, as all the narrow-minded people think; it means that *God is free to accept or refuse – as He wants – the rules He creates*. From His revelation in the profane world, God is order, law, limitation;

and still, as an absolute possibility of the world, He is free to choose the event. In the world – in the Sun, stars, flowers, stones, women -, God is the beauty principle measured exactly; in His inner nature, however, God is blind disorder and as a result, He's the frightening ugliness! That is why I had not stopped wondering whether the ugly principle has subtler prototypes than beauty, patterns still undiscovered by human mind neither as individual entity, nor as an apparent revelation of collective unconscious." (Culianu, 2011, p. 22).

As we see it, the paragraph above opens multiple directions in Ioan Petru Culianu's system of thought, by means of continuity between opposite principles and the perspective of divine and material deceptive appearance, because the surface structure hides divergent negative characteristics. However, his vision upon beauty reminds us of Victor Hugo's *Preface* for *Cromwell* drama: "If beauty has only one face, ugliness has one thousand forms and as a result, literature gets rich with thousands of themes." (Hugo, 2001).

4. The Intertextual Dialogue between Mircea Eliade and His Disciple, Ioan Petru Culianu Concerning the Subject of *Hesperus* Science Fiction Novel

One should remember how Mircea Eliade appreciates his disciple's option to write a science fiction novel entitled *Hesperus*: "It would be interesting to know if the knowledge of religious ideas, beliefs and techniques prepared or brought about the central theme of *Hesperus*. It is important to underline now the fact that a young scientist who knew a lot of philological concepts and ideas felt the imperative need – which had been very well accomplished – to write a novel that is at the same time a science fiction work and a "philosophical trip" to a parallel world. (...) The adventures of the future protagonists have a mythological structure, without repeating or adapting certain exotic or European myths." (Culianu, 1998).

Another essential aspect noticed by Mircea Eliade in Ioan Petru Culianu's science fiction novel *Hesperus* is the occurrence of the temporal dimension which is different from the profane one: "In spite of the fabulous progresses registered by a futurist technology, human condition can still be identified in this anticipatory story at the protagonists' level. There is only one different dimension: the human temporal experience. However, it is an essential difference. And one of the most interesting discovery of this adventure novel with events located in a not very far future is that

the writer succeeded in shaping a traditional story with protagonists that have a different time dimension.” (Culianu, 1998).

5. The “*Hesperian*” Being’s Nostalgia after the Ephemeral Human Condition

The mythical representations of the contemporary world’s decay and a new, possible world’s re-creation include complementary mythical images, such as: the myth of recovering unity and primordial paradisiacal harmony and the temporal dimension of existence, about which science fiction literature learns us it has to be improved by means of the human being’s temporal transformation at the level of thought: “The central paradox lies in human perception of time.” (Herbert, 2009, p. 117). From our point of view, Mircea Eliade succeeds in unifying the paradox of human thought through the possibility of surpassing the limited human condition by means of finding new spatial and temporal dimensions which are complementary to the profane life. If science fiction literature can create a new start only in a possible, alternative world which is completely different from our world, Mircea Eliade’s literary works include the chain of destruction and re-birth in the profane world we all know.

From our perspective, the new aspect that Ioan Petru Culianu introduces in his novel is the “hesperian” being’s nostalgia after the ephemeral human condition. However, one can notice here the mythical desire of returning to the origins, to the essence. If the hyperboreans’ project belonging to the human beings includes the creation of a new world, called *Hesperus*, that “will not interfere with suffering, wish and death”, a fact which illustrates the ephemeral human being’s interior need to exceed his/her limited condition, by means of the immortality aim, mentioned in the end of the novel. However, the perspective is changing, because, unsurprisingly, in spite of getting immortality, seen as the source of happiness, the individual becomes nostalgic and would like to return to his/her ephemeral condition: “Is there any point in the return of humanity? Is human civilization, with all her emotions, self-control, fears, truly superior to the artificial paradise of ignorance created by Horton?” (Culianu, 1998, pp. 78-79). Moreover, the perspective of the erudite narrator who knows the mythical wish of the human being to always be different, is illustrated in the text by means of a protagonist that describes the scenario of the alternative world in *Hesperus*: “I know that you are the product of a century disease: the dream of technological happiness and perfect humanity.” (Culianu, 1998, p. 95). The key of

Hesperus novel is the fact that the human being does not have to lose his/her mythical and symbolic points of reference whenever he/she is discontent with the limited condition, because the stimulating energies are inside the human being and moreover, if we remember Spinoza's words, happiness is an option, not the result of the actions which have a materialistic finality.

From Ioan Petru Culianu's point of view, the fundamental aspect that can explain the essence of human condition is illusion. However, illusion is the main feature from Plato's *Myth of the Cave*, because of the deceptive senses that can only perceive the shades of transcendental reality. The original vision which is introduced by the Romanian writer in his science fiction novel is the fact that death is not the end of life, but it assures the continuity of life, both in our world, and in an alternative, possible, science fiction world. An eloquent example is represented by teacher Damian's discourse from this novel: "I would like to confirm that materials produced by you prove that Horton disintegrated some human beings. But this fission does not mean death. By means of it, existence does not stop, it is only suspended in a new dimension..." (Culianu, 1998, p. 16). We can notice here the presence of pantheism, the faith that requires the divine principle in every natural element and the hope of after-death integration in the natural world, under different life forms, either vegetal or animal. Furthermore, Mircea Eliade includes this perspective upon after-death life in his complex work entitled *The History of Religious Ideas* and this fact certifies the continuity of Mircea Eliade and his disciple's systems of thought. Further on, in Ioan Petru Culianu's novel, illusion is called "The Art of Transformation" and the human being, who constantly believes that he/she will achieve happiness by means of the Utopian aim of immortality, which can be applied to the artificial space of *Hesperus*, forgets that reality surrounding him/her is dominated by favorable energies of eternal nature, such as: liberty, buoyancy and beatitude. If the human being knows that such positive features and energies exist, by means of symbolic active imagination, he/she can make the transfer of vital energies from nature in his/her body, both in his/her lifetime and after death. From Ioan Petru Culianu's point of view, illusion is "The Art of Transformation", because all the assumptions of the human being concerning existence and the nostalgia after edenic, primordial paradise are linked to the "results of our deeds" (Eliade, 2011), to materialistic values and this approach to life causes nothing else than the prolongation of agonizing state, typical of the individual who does not understand his/her condition and function on earth. However, a solution to this issue is the aim of *Bhagavad-Gita* Indian work, by means of the human being's detachment from things that are not typical of the ontological mythical substratum:

“The Art of Transformation gives people the power to produce paradoxical phenomenas, illusions and we are not able to defend ourselves against them, because we are not capable to distinguish illusion from reality. And even if we were capable of doing this, how could we defend ourselves against an illusion you cannot destroy with materialistic means?” (Culianu, 1998, p. 14). This scenario acquires apocalyptic dimensions if the human being becomes immortal, just as once happened with the Hesperus project’s materialization: Human illusions would infinitely perpetuate and this would determine the continuous ontological suffering and freedom, the fundamental mythical value of the individual would be cancelled, by means of the “hesperiens” compulsion to live in an isolated space, with no possibility to escape, in order to capture an energy, which is the main engine of this alternative universe.

From Ioan Petru Culianu’s perspective, the ability to dream is complementary to freedom. At this level, the hyperboreans’ world is superior to the alternative science fiction world of “hesperiens”, because dreaming is “a revelation of the effortless Freedom” (Culianu, 1998, p. 21), an ontological quality that is not shared by the alternative world’s inhabitants. Moreover, an argument that certifies the fact that Ioan Petru Culianu’s science fiction novel is organized around mythical logic is the remembrance of oneiric typology: “At the end of late Antiquity, all people were still dreaming.” (Culianu, 1998, 21).

Another Ioan Petru Culianu’s perspective that illustrates the convergence of Mircea Eliade and Ioan Petru Culianu’s systems of thought is the apocalyptic life scenario on earth, in the same way that Indian culture presents the theory of “the four *yugas*”, which is integrated in Mircea Eliade’s *History of Religious Ideas*: “I need an ampler imagination than I have now to describe the infernal life on earth before the catastrophe. Human beings had become absolutely selfish one to another. Reciprocal respect was completely lacking, and the fear of authority did not give the expected answer.” (Culianu, 1998, p. 46). The nostalgia to retrieve the primordial human state, characterized by essential mythical values is activated when aggressively between people is noticed: “Antiquity fellows – I have found out on my visual historical computer – had in their vocabulary concepts like: *fear, embarrassment, honor, dishonor*, etc., terms which are impossible to translate in modern language. Because these states have completely disappeared from our existence, and not even a single word is any longer necessary to name them.” (Culianu, 1998, p.19).

Finally, the creation of an alternative universe, called *Hesperus*, having new and perfect temporal, spatial and ontological dimensions, from the perspective of profane human beings who are not capable to perceive the energies of eternal nature, is useful

because the drawbacks of this ideal and boring universe, due to its lack of evolution, remind the human being of the original ontological vitality.

6. Conclusions

Reading scientific and literary works belonging to Mircea Eliade and Ioan Petru Culianu is an obligatory charge to notice the multiple aspects of life and to discover the inner ontological resources, because their works are a lesson to see that the human being should not give up surpassing his/her limited condition and explaining the mysteries of the world. In order to achieve these aims, the individual should make use of the active symbolic imagination, because it offers him/her the chance to exceed his/her condition, by means of integrating in the interior time dimension and opportunity to make symbolic connections between natural elements and divine revelations, flashbacks, anticipatory projections in time, possible scenarios and so on. Last but not least, the research in this article is useful nowadays, because both cultural personalities: Mircea Eliade and his disciple, Ioan Petru Culianu combine scientific, mathematical research, which can be found in their theoretical works, with the fantastical aesthetic category of their literary writings. This mixture is doubled by intertextuality, due to the fact that Mircea Eliade and Ioan Petru Culianu's perspectives are always redefining, by means of a constant dialogue between them, which is extremely actual and typical of postmodernism and postmodernity.

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