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Mircea Eliade and the Terror of History. Anti-Historicism and the History of Religions

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Summary/Abstract: This paper is a detailed examination of Mircea Eliade's book, *Cosmos and History, The Myth of the Eternal Return*, presented together with the Journal notes he wrote while he was composing the volume. Using both published and unpublished parts of the Journal, I am able to show how the volume evolved and disclose some of the difficulties Eliade had to overcome in writing it.

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The terror of history was the time in bondage for Romanians who were in the hands of the oppressive forces, which invaded Romania time and again. He sums it up thus: 'There is no effective military or political defense against the "terror of history", simply because of the crushing inequality between the invaders and the invaded peoples....Small political groups of peasants could not long resist the masses of the invaders' But the folk genius gave the most effective response through folk-lore which transformed these misfortunes into moments. Eliade lived and wrote at a time when theological writings urged for the separation of 'religion' and 'Christianity'. The renowned historian of religions, Mircea Eliade, published "The Myth of the Eternal Return" in 1954. This was his first major work to appear in English, a revised translation of a 1949 French edition. In it he identifies a more. The renowned historian of religions, Mircea Eliade, published "The Myth of the Eternal Return" in 1954. The article discusses 29 new letters of Ioan Petru Culianu to Mircea Eliade from the years 1972-1982. They were found in the 'Mircea Eliade Papers' at the University of Chicago Library, in one of the boxes with manuscripts damaged in the fire that devastated Eliade's office in December 1985. The letters required a painful transcription and a careful reconstruction of the text from the parts burned by fire or washed by water. Mircea Eliade (1907-1986) was one of the twentieth century's most groundbreaking and influential historians of religion. Born in Romania, he eventually became the chairman of the department of the history of religions at the University of Chicago. He was the author of a great number of books, the most significant of which are generally held to be The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion and The Myth of the Eternal Return (also known as Cosmos and History). Eliade's chief aim was to identify and describe the underlying patterns in the mindset with which people who belong to tradition. In the final chapter of The Myth of the Eternal Return Eliade contrasts what he terms "traditional man" (the man of archaic culture) with "historical man (modern man)." Eliade maintains that traditional man had a negative attitude toward history and sought to "abolish" history through various means, primarily through the philosophy or ontology of archetypes by which historical events were assimilated to

constantly repeated or unchanging patterns. Now Eliade is well aware of the "Difficulties of Historicism." In this second section he asks: "How could Hegel know what was necessary in history...? Hegel believed that he knew what the Universal Spirit wanted." Mircea Eliade (1907–1986) was a Romanian historian of religion, fiction writer, philosopher, and professor at the University of Chicago. He is known for his research of the symbolic language used by various religious traditions. Eliade received an M.A. in philosophy from the University of Bucharest in 1928. He studied Sanskrit and Indian philosophy at the University of Calcutta (1928-31) and then lived for six months in the Ashram (hermitage) of Rishikesh, Himalayas. After returning to Romania, he