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 Using both published and unpublished parts of the Journal, I am able to show how the volume evolved and disclose some of the difficulties Eliade had to overcome in writing it.
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...
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