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**THE EXPERIENCE OF THE LIMIT OR THE FAILURE OF THE
HUMAN: A PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY AGAINST THE
BACKDROP OF THE SACRED-PROFANE DIALECTIC**

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Abstract: The text aims to analyze modes of subjectivation in the context of the meta-experience of the sacred-profane dialectic, particularly in the context of the full concealment of the sacred in the profane. The authors start from the hypothesis of the revelation of an irreducible ontological structure of the human, which is the experience of the paradoxical limit between aformal and formal. Consequently, the endeavor of the authors is structured as a way of confirming their hypothesis through: 1) analysing the specificity of Eliade's anti-reductionist approach as a historian and philosopher of religions and his openness towards anthropology; 2) the application of phenomenology and hermeneutics in order to show Eliade's research scheme: facts - forms - symbolical structures - existential structures; 3) explaining the experience of the paradoxical limit between the sacred and the profane as a structure of the human; 4) inventorizing the human structures and the modes of subjectivation generated by the irreducibility of the experience of the paradoxical limit; 5) a brief account of the reinterpretation of the experience of the limit as a structure of the humanity in contemporary phenomenological writings.

The authors consider that the experience of the paradoxical limit between the sacred and the profane, the miracle and the ordinary, is irreducible, and the proof is the interpretation of that limit in contemporary philosophical works in the form of: sovereignty (Georges Bataille), self-affection of Life (Michel Henry), or desire of the self through the other (Renaud Barbaras). The hypothesis of the experience of the limit or of the transformation of the man in the limit as a structure of the human is confirmed, as well as the interpretation of that limit by Eliade as *coincidentia oppositorum*.

Key words: homo religiosus, philosophical anthropology, the sacred and the profane, *coincidentia oppositorum*, the sovereign subject, Mircea Eliade.

We fail humanity when we forget or refuse to experience the limit upon which the other which removes us from ourselves emerges. How do we read the opus of Mircea Eliade in order to inhabit the limit that makes miracles knowledgeable? What would Eliade recommend the contemporary man to take back from the experience of *homo religiosus*? The role of the philosopher of religions is to mediate the encounter with the other in order to enable us to reveal ourselves, to remind us that the world is not merely the environment, and that life is not just the satisfaction of needs, but the longing for the other. In a world market by the myth of progress, by an anthropocentrism based on occidental rationality, on the conception that otherness is bound to become identity through self-referentiality, Eliade is interested in the encounter with the other. The other as a spatial, temporal, and ontological otherness, the stranger - oriental, archaic, divine - becomes for the historian of religions the alternative for winning back the authenticity of the modern man. Eliade does not register the history of religions as a process of sacralization, but as a passageway between the archaic man and the modern man that has philosophical questions (Eliade 1991, 13-44; Eliade 1992b, 85-93; Eliade 1994, 37-40).

The hypothesis of this paper is the following: if the passageway between archaic and modern humanity opens a broad circle of interpretation as part of a philosophical anthropology that reveals the constitutive structure of humanity, then it is possible that that structure might be explicitly present in the archaic ontology and implicitly present in modernity.

We will verify the hypothesis by taking the following steps: 1. Analysing the specificities of Eliade's anti-reductionist endeavor as a historian and philosopher of religions in the analysis of the religious experience as an experience of the limit; 2. Applying phenomenological and hermeneutical tools in order to reveal the scheme: facts - forms-symbolical structures - existential structures; 3. Explaining the paradoxical experience of the limit between the sacred and the profane as a structure of the human; 4. Inventorizing human structures and modes of subjectivation generated by the irreducibility of the experience of the paradoxical limit; 5. Briefly showing the resurfacing of the experience of the limit as a structure of the human in contemporary philosophical works.

We will analyze more the ontological and phenomenological implications of the anthropological structures at stake and we will rely on the interpretations of Eliade voiced by Ioan Petru Culianu (Culianu 2004, 32-147; Culianu 2002, 47-164), as well as by Allen Douglas (from the perspective of husserlian phenomenology) (Douglas 1982, 65-233) and of Aurel Codoban (on ontophany and the "ontology of the signifying surface") (Codoban 1998, 35-179). We will actualize the

anthropological stakes of Eliade starting from the *experience of the limit* as an irreducible structure between the world and the human, as interpreted by Georges Bataille (Bataille 2004, 15-65) and then we will rely on contemporary approaches to phenomenology from a religious perspective as voiced by Michel Henry (Henry 2003, 43-105), and finally on the phenomenology of life of Renaud Barbaras (Barbaras 2012, 94-111). We will not insist on the morphology of the sacred, on the conflicts sparked by the different levels of analysis in Eliade's work, on his political orientations; we will briefly state his theses and principles and we will insist on his philosophy and its contemporary anthropological stakes.

1. The specificities of the approach – the analysis of religious experience as an experience of the limit.

The perspective of an anthropological philosophy in the works of Eliade is opened up by the references to ontology which permeate his entire work, as well as his understanding of the sacred as both real and saturated with being. His anti-reductionist endeavor, as encapsulated in the formula "the ladder creates the phenomenon" brings Eliade in front of the originary religious phenomenon: the emergence of the sacred as a hierophany whose language are symbols and myths. The process of sacralization is a sacred-profane dialectic which unveils a mode of being of the sacred and a particular positioning of the man towards the sacred. The sacred-profane dialectic reveals a replacement of the economy of the sacred based on celestial gods with the sacralization of Life itself, brought about by practicing agriculture, and then later on followed by the sacralization of historical moments. Consequently, the discovery of Eliade lies in the fact that he underlies, both in his scientific arguments and in his confessions, that the sacred is "an element in the structure of consciousness", "the experience of reality and the spring of consciousness"; "religiosity is a constitutive structure of the man" which is condemned to the sacred profane-dialectic. Analysing the sacred profane-dialectic, Eliade is aware of the phenomenon of desacralization or secularization, which he interprets as "the perfect concealment of the sacred, more precisely the identification of the sacred with the profane" (Eliade 1990, 131-132; Eliade 1992, 9). In fact, Eliade had announced as the last chapter of his last book on the *History of Ideas and Religious Beliefs* the analysis of this concealment which he perceived as the only product of the modern world.

The specific contribution of Eliade as a philosopher of religions is focused on the irreducibility of the sacred; the dialectic and the camouflage of the sacred in the profane and in the symbolical archetype "coincidentia oppositorum" which is employed for interpreting the modern interactions between the sacred and the profane. The major

role of Eliade, as captured by the analysis of Aurel Codoban (Codoban 1998), is the idea that the dialectic of the transformation of the sacred in the profane implicitly means a concealment of the sacred in the profane. This idea is crucial, especially when it comes to comparing the sacred-profane dialectic with secularization. Such analyses underline that the religious experience is the act through which something *entirely different* is manifested in objects from the natural world - thus, the sacred is ontologically speaking at the level of the subject as transcendence. The religious man experiences his situation in the world through the religious experience which is “the lived answer of the concrete man - open towards the transcendental, but deeply rooted in a culture - facing a mystery”; it is “a symbolic relationship with the transcendent”; “an interpretation of the world through the intentionality of the sacred” (Codoban 1998, 43). Since when it comes to religious experience the absolute is impossible to capture otherwise than through hierophany, “the existential character of our being is the sacred, not the absolute, the transcending, not transcendence, it asks us to understand our own life as an initiation in the imminence of a revelation that does not happen” (Codoban 1998, 41).

We are interested in hierophany as a religious experience of the limit, as a “passage” between the natural and the supra-natural and a situation of the man on the paradoxical limit of the encounter with mystery. This experience of the limit between the sacred and the profane is hierophany. We can thus speak of a religious meta-experience as a transformation of the sacred in the profane, of the profane in the sacred: “the dialectic of the relationship between the sacred and the profane opens the framework of a religious meta-experience, in which the personal and collective religious experiences converge towards a certain direction”(Codoban 1998, 170).

2. Applying the methods: existential phenomenology and structural hermeneutics.

A large part of the criticisms brought against Eliade derive from his application of research methods to the religious phenomenon, from his overlapping scientific and normative, existential judgments. This aspect is well clarified by Culianu, who invites us to see Eliade’s endeavor as architectonic, as a construction with several layers. The first layer, preceded by the denial of the natural attitude, is the encounter with the sacred, and then the second level involves a certain education of the gaze, through comparisons and inductive generalizations, in order to capture forms beyond facts. The third level requires a descriptive phenomenology, but at the same time a regressive one (Culianu 2004, 85-147). In parallel there is the level of signification applied through the “structural hermeneutics” (Rasmussen 1978, 99) which enables us

to discover that the structure of hierophany is constant and that it tends towards becoming a pattern. Culianu shows that these patterns are transcendental, like in Husserl's philosophy: "Eliade does not observe the a posteriori existence of religious structures, but reaches the conclusion that such structures represent originary phenomena which inform consciousness instead of being formed by it" (Culianu 2004, 120).

From the architectonic of Eliade's analyses, we are interested in the final level, that of the "interplay between logical hypotheses and humanitarian concerns" (Culianu 2004, 107). Through "the game of hypotheses" behind the interpretations of the religious phenomenon, Eliade derives a *Weltbild* in the shape of frameworks of thought, through which he aims to recover the symbolic dimension of the trans conscious for the modern man. Eliade's project of re-establishing the principles of that *Weltbild* of the archaic man is part of a new epistemological paradigm in anthropology (Culianu 2002, 47-164). His approach considers that each religious document reveals a mode of being of the sacred as hierophany, but that this at the same time implies a certain positioning of the man towards the sacred (Eliade 1992a, 15-30).

The "game of hypotheses" played by Eliade is confirmed if we follow his process under the formula: facts - forms - symbolic structures - ontological structures. Allen Douglas follows such an approach, claiming that Eliade adopts a descriptive, regressive, and ontological phenomenology, being constrained by 1. the irreducibility of the sacred and 2. the sacred-profane dialectic. The researcher does not see the world as an objective totality, but as an intentional configuration: "the phenomenological perspective must enable him to decipher these given facts that reveal the religious phenomena which constitute the *Lebenswelt* of the homo religious..." (Douglas 1982, 67). The positioning in the same perspective as homo religiosus in order to capture the intentionality of his behavior involves a phenomenological *epoche*, "cancelling the judgment that it might have upon a phenomenon, bracketing it and trying to uncover its meaning in the way in which it gives itself" (Douglas 1982, 70).

The second principle of Eliade's hermeneutics, the dialectic of the sacred and of the profane, is introduced exactly in order to capture this intentional characteristic of the sacred (Rassmunsen 1978, 99). The analyses emphasize general and universal structures which are sedimented in a passive way, but are being applied by homo religiosus in a creative manner in his own religious universe. It is necessary to apply the phenomenological method in order to capture the dynamic interaction of the fact and of the essence, of the particular historical incarnation and of its structure, in order to reach a "constituted givenness" (Douglas 1982, 101-185). The descriptive phenomenological

process reveals at the same time modes of being of the man expressed through symbols which act according to their own logic and form coherent structural networks. Eliade applies an existentialist phenomenology in the interpretation of symbols which surpasses both descriptive phenomenology and hermeneutics. Following Ricoeur, he understands that “the symbol, used as a key of human reality, will verify itself through the power to incite, clarify, and order human experience” (Ricoeur 1959, 330-331). This is why, through the philosophical phenomenology he practices, he aims that “starting from symbols, to elaborate existential concepts - not just structures of reflection, but structures of existence” (Ricoeur 1959, 331-332). Eliade sees the archetypal symbolisms as codes of reality and reaches existential concepts which operate at a high level of generalization. These concepts, able to reveal fundamental structures of the human condition, bring him in the situation of producing “judgments with an ontological character regarding human nature and experience” (Douglas 1982, 159). Consequently, in the case of Eliade there is an ontological transgression of descriptive phenomenology which becomes philosophical anthropology starting from the analysis of the primitive symbolical structures.

The method of the expansion of generalizations and of transgressing the concept of ontology was used by Merleau-Ponty, (Merleau-Ponty 1976, i-xvi) who studied the structures of perceptive consciousness in order to discover structures of human consciousness. Eliade proceeds in a similar fashion: he starts from originary facts, then uncovers their symbolic structures, and then he reaches the existential concepts which represent structures of reflection and existence. Exactly like the paradoxical limit of passing from chaos to the Cosmos.

3. The experience of the paradoxical limit – coincidentia oppositorum

The limit discovered by Eliade is theorized all along the history of philosophy. First, Plato, in the dialogue *Timaeus*, speaks of this limit as an in-between stage between pre-established categories, a limit which brings closer and distant at the same time - the platonic khora. This atypical limit is the becoming, the passage that we discover in archaic ontology in the shape of a permanent transcending as an abolition of the profane and a recovery of the sacred. Closer to the total camouflage of the sacred in the profane, the limit as an experience of the proximity of excess, of the sacred, is theorized by Georges Bataille through his concept of sovereignty. Sovereignty is the fragmentation of a subject which constitutes itself through situating itself on the limit of an excess (Bataille 2004, 45-65). Another example is the derridean khora, an atopus which enables the transgression of the limit between formal and

a-formal: "how should we think the necessity of something which, giving way to this opposition, as well as to so many others, seems to not obey the law of the thing which it situates? What is this place?" (Derrida 1998, 22).

We consider that the specific approach of religious experience and phenomena, as well as Eliade's research method testify his preoccupation towards the experience of paradoxical limit at the level of ontological structure, not just of mythical archetype. Hierophany transforms man in a paradoxical limit expressed through the concurrence of opposing factors, such that the experience of the sacred in the sacred-profane dialectic is in fact an experience of the limit. We observe the presence of the limit in religious experience as an encounter of the man with the sacred, and then in the paradoxical co-existence of the natural and the supernatural which is involved by the dialectic of the sacred and of the profane. The total camouflage of the sacred in the profane transforms man in the limit between the sacred and the profane, the ordinary and the miraculous. The experience of this limit places the religious man in a crisis which reveals his double nature: empirical - transcendental, and constrains him to evaluate, to differentiate and to choose, but the crisis that his situation involves is part of his situation in the world. This means that transcendence as a participation/abolishment is the dynamic of the life of the religious man oriented towards the sacred. This enables to approach Eliade's work through the perspective of an anthropology that perceives ontology as preoccupied not just with the meaning of human existence oriented towards the sacred, but also towards how man experiences this paradoxical limit of hierophany.

4. Anthropological structures or modes of subjectivation in the sacred-profane dialectic

We aim to analyze modes of subjectivation in the context of the meta-experience which is the sacred-profane dialectic, from the perspective of a philosophy that is entangled with religion. The implicit anthropology in Eliade's work reveals that the religious archaic man constitutes himself permanently starting from hierophany as a paradoxical limit of the eruption of the sacred in the profane, experienced as an event. Eliade's humanitarian concern is not just towards a recovery of the total man (unconscious, conscious, trans conscious), but also as a revelation of the experience of that paradoxical limit, which we understand as an anthropological structure.

4.1. Before the subject. Homo religiosus: the integral man as a “singular-plural” being

Through analysing archaic ontology from the perspective of experiencing the paradoxical limit we discover on the one side the absence of the subject because the archaic man is permanently a work in progress; on the other side the integral man, whose psychic apparatus is not divided in trans conscious - conscious - unconscious as his identity is an enlarged identity, since he is a communitarian, “singular-plural being” (Nancy 1998, 48-86). If we look at archaic ontology by emphasizing repetition and regeneration, and not archetypes, then we observe that in his life the decisive factor is the experience of creation as a symbol of the limit between aformal and formal. The man is not situated either on one side or on the other, he becomes in the act of the repetition between the situation and the limit and lives in the breaking point which emerges through the paradoxical eruption of the sacred. We have to think of the religious man, destined towards a hierophanic experience as situated in the symbolical dimension of openness, as captured by the expression *coincidentia oppositorum*.

The hermeneutics of religion reveals itself in the original ontology whose stake is the effort of constant re-constitution through the reintegration and regeneration of Creation as a radical beginning. Creation is the initial archetype as a paradoxical passage from chaos to Cosmos. This shapes human experience as a passage in the form of transcending through participation, imitation, which are symbolically regulated by myths and rituals. Consequently, the original ontology reveals itself as a pragmatic ontology precisely because it is not blocked at a theoretical level, but the opening of the profane in the symbolical dimension can be equated with an insertion in the real, thereby constituting “a pragmatic ontology, in the sense that it tries, with the help of these truths, to inscribe itself in the real” (Eliade 1992a, 49).

In this symbolic dimension we speak of the man as a singular-plural existence, which constantly re-builds his reality and his identity. The original community is in fact communication, an unspeakable secret, in the words of Maurice Blanchot (Blanchot 2015, 79) which reveals itself through myths or rituals. The community constitutes itself through the repetition of archetypes, through myths and rituals: “the ritual is the communitarian articulation of the mythical voice (...) the voice is essentially communitarian. The myth does not emerge only in a community and for a community: they co-constitute each other, infinitely and immediately” (Levi-Strauss 1971, 560). The myth and the ritual are the story of the emergence of being, and this ontophanic function enables the emergence of mechanisms of initiation, which cancel the natural attitude. “The myth reveals the community to itself

and establishes it. It is always a myth of the community, a myth of communion - a unique voice of several people" (Nancy 2005, 77).

The dialectic of the sacred and the profane enables us to claim that the archaic ontology is only at the explanatory level a metaphysical structure - however, Eliade builds his hypotheses within the framework of the paradigm of the subject. But the accent there is on the manifestation, on the hierophany of a divine which remains hidden, but which transforms the world, life, and the man in a symbolic language. This language as a symbol and as a myth becomes performative in the sense that this man permanently builds his identity through a transcending which reveals to us the man as an open existence. The opening, the permanent constitution emerges as the result of an effort to uncover the traces of the Creator, the transcendent god who is accessible only through the hierophany of nature as Cosmos, and then of life, and then of history.

4.2. The instauration of the sovereign subject

What happens when religious experience is drawn further from the horizon of patterns and repetition? Homo religiosus transforms himself into a subject whose religious experience is historicized, and the category of relating to the divine is faith: everything becomes possible. The acceptance of faith is "the new formula of collaboration between man and creation, the first but also the last which was given to him since the overcoming of the traditional horizon of patterns and repetition" (Eliade 1991, 117). The experience of faith is an experience of the limit through the hierophany of time which involves a constant awakening in order to not miss the emergence of the event. It also involves a hierophany of the man through the embodiment of the divine in the human, from now on the experience of the limit requires a tension which crunches time in the moment of the emergence of the miracle. Except for faith, "any other positioning of the modern man, on the limit, leads to despair" (Eliade 1991, 118). Christianity is the religion of the modern and historical man who discovered at the same time personal liberty and the continuous time, but it is also the religion of the fallen man, the man integrated in history and progress, considered by Eliade as a falling out of the paradise of patterns and repetition. However, Eliade believes in a synthesis of the archaic conception with that proposed by christianity: in fact, he grants the modern man an open sensibility in order to awaken within himself the experience of renewal, even if we are speaking of a personal renewal, as enabled by faith. Nonetheless, among Eliade's forecasts regarding the destiny of humanity, there was also the adoption of faith as a creative liberty, proposed as an alternative to despair, since "the horizon of archetypes and repetition cannot be overcome without risks only if we

adhere to a philosophy of liberty that does not exclude God" (Eliade 1991, 117).

The apparition of christianity brought about the birth of the subject, as it accredited a search of the truth within ourselves: "christianity turns the mind to the interior and thereby makes possible the existence of the kantian subject and anticipates the modern philosophies of subjectivity" (Caputo and Vattimo 2008, 51). The dialectic of the transcending of the sacred in the profane involves a transition from a philosophy of substance to a philosophy of the subject, but under the sign of an operationalizing rationality, of a transformation of the cosmos in the nature which functions exclusively according to scientific laws. Consequently, in the path of the subject towards the person, the subject assumed the role of an ego which owns a world, an increasingly sovereign subject which functions as an apperceptive unity of the diverse and which has almost missed the experience of the paradoxical limit.

4.3. The dethronement of the subject - advancements and risks

At this point of the analysis we can underline a paradox: the evolution of the dialectic of the sacred which is entirely concealed in the profane brought the subject in the situation of deciphering an imperceptible miracle with the instruments of an operating rationality. The problems that this paradox involves raise questions such as: how can we recover the symbolical being which detects the sacred in the immanent? Is Eliade's solution of acknowledging that the a-religious man is just the heir of the religious man enough? Can the recoveries of homo religious, loaden with failures which become risks (objectification, the transhuman), be radicalized? Can the religions which are ontologies, such as christianity, take over the solutions of postmodern philosophy, which are more radical in recovering religion as an experience of the limit?

The positive hermeneutics is practiced by Eliade against the background of the principle of the irreducibility of the sacred and of the sacred-profane dialectic. This is why the sole creation of the modern world - the perfect concealment, or the identification of the sacred with the profane - is the real dialectic of the sacred. This hermeneutics is loyal to a new humanism through the recovery of the integral man who is aware that his life is an experience of the imperceptible limit between the sacred and the profane. The philosophy of religions is involved, as Adrian Marion observes, in "the operation of an inverse demystification: the uncovering of all the sacred meanings of the modern, secularized world, as well as an enhancement of the concealed symbols and myths" (Marino 1980, 159). The demystification or the rediscovery

of the sacred which became imperceptible means, at the same time, the deconstruction and re-positioning of the modern man, a partial man dominated by operational rationality. The modern subject needs to become aware that he is the heir of homo religiosus.

Through a comparative analysis of the two modes of being - religious and a-religious - Eliade discovers that at an unconsciousness level the a-religious man is constituted in the same way as the religious man, namely through passive sedimentations of mythological behaviors. The uncovering of these patterns shows that he is the heir of the situations lived by the homo religiosus, and these situations leave traces which form part of his own history, even if they are seemingly overcome by history. In Eliade's words: "the modern man, radically secularized, thinks of himself or wants to be an atheist, a-religious or at least indifferent. But he is wrong. He did not yet manage to abolish the homo religiosus which is inside him: he only managed to abolish the homo *christianus*..." (Eliade 1993, 433).

The framework through which Eliade understands the man is the meta-experience of the sacred-profane dialectic. In its natural movement, the modern man lost only the capacity of acknowledging and living religious consciously, but he keeps its memory in the depths of his being: "after the first <<fall>>, religious had fallen only to the level of a shattered consciousness; after the second one, it fell even deeper, to the depths of unconscious: it was <<forgotten>>" (Eliade 1992b, 199). Consequently, the explanation of the behavior of the modern is that, after the *second fall*, they lost the possibility of experiencing the sacred at the level of the conscious. The moderns declare themselves a-religious because "religion and mythology have <<occulted>> in the depths of the unconscious - which means that the possibilities of reintegrating a religious experience of life lie very deeply hidden in such beings" (Eliade 1992b, 198). The analysis of the escapist and utopian dreams of the modern man show that, despite his refusals and abnegations, he continues to be haunted by the realities which he disapproves of. An example can be precisely the effort of refusing religiousness. However, contemporary behaviors show an infinity of symbols which conceal religious nostalgias.

The contemporary situation of the perfect camouflage of the sacred in the profane involves a hermeneutics which can recover meanings of contemporary behaviors and reveal their symbolic meanings and their eventual ontological structures. We observe that we discover in the total camouflage of the sacred in the profane a subjectivation which goes either in the direction of positive hermeneutics and thus admits the recovery of the symbolical meanings and de-sacralized manifestations, or in the risky direction of acknowledging secularization and the disappear of symbols. First, the recovery of the symbolic nature of the human is visible in mass culture

through the media which transform man into a *relational man*. These media perpetuate in a concealed way downgraded symbolical structures, but it is certain that in the contemporary society of communication the status of man as intermediary being is maintained. Secondly, it is more and more obvious that the person who is initially the subject of desire and then the massed individual who is transformed into a consumer which needs to be seduced has failed. If the world of the transcendent, religious or philosophical, meant an accreditation of the signifieds more than of the recipients of such signifiers, on the contrary, in the "occidental societies of over-consumption, the register of signs has changed: there more recipients of signifiers than signifieds, we accredit more the reality of the recipients of signs" (Codoban 2004, 93).

The visible risks of the subjectivation inaugurated by secularization in contemporaneity are, in a brief presentation, the following. a. the subject as a body. The ontological model of immanence has accentuated the figure of otherness, a figure which has brought the *other* as a body, as a simulacrum of the soul. Communication is built upon difference and upon the plurality of the egos, but these egos belong to different bodies, and seduction is realized through sensual corporal communication, through the expressivity of the body transformed into language; b. the ecstasy of communication - since it becomes more and more clear that the technology plays the role of a liaison of a dispersed society. The passage from the ecstasy of meaning to the ecstasy of communication after the disappear of the opposition between the subject and the object has transformed the world into a network, a screen (not a stage) so that "there is no more depth or transcendence, only the immanent surface of the unveiling of operations, the neat and operational surface of communication" (Baudrillard 1997, 8); c. the transhuman and the anthropocene. The transhuman as a transformation of the person through the attenuation of the differences between the man and the machine and through the utilization of bio-technologies for ameliorating the physical and mental characteristics of the human being; the anthropocene is the moniker of a new era marked by the destructive action of the human species towards the natural forces - in fact, the human species is self-destructive.

The analysis of these risks makes obvious the disappearance of the paradoxical limit of the constitution of the human. This disappearance has led to a radicalization of the recovery of the man, such that the man becomes the limit that contemporary philosophies use in order to dethrone the sovereign subject.

5. Beyond the subject. Contemporary illustrations of the paradoxical limit

How would Eliade approach the contemporary man in order to recover his relationship with the sacred, with the world, or with life? Is the correlation between man and the world possible otherwise than in metaphysical theology or through secularization as a total enclosure of the subject, as previously discussed?

We think that Eliade would propose that instead of the subject, we would speak of man as a “place” of passage of the sacred in the profane, of the miracle in the ordinary, following the archetype of *coincidentia oppositorum*. This man, situated on the atypical and unrecognizable limit between the sacred and the profane, is not constituted through a dynamic of abolishing the natural, but through a permanent positioning/communication of man in the imminence of the sacred entirely concealed in the profane. The “subject” which constitutes himself starting from what is being manifested or “given” demands the reversal of the poles of the correlation between consciousness and the world. Just like it happens in the turning point in phenomenology towards theology or in the phenomenology of life of Merleau-Ponty, (Merleau-Ponty 2017, 73-317); Jan Patocka (Patocka 1989) or Barbaras (Barbaras 2008, 3-17). Subjectivation is not directed by the consciousness which gives meaning, but transforms itself into an experience of finitude, self-affectation of life or desire of the self through the other, as we will exemplify by reference to Georges Bataille (Bataille 2004, 45-65), Michel Henry (Henry 2003, 43-105) and Renaud Barbaras (Barbaras 2012, 94-111).

5.1. Sovereignty as an experience of the limit

Georges Bataille speaks about the disappearance of sovereignty as an authority and as transcendence, as a unifying illusion of the subject; instead, he proposes recovering the lost sovereignty of the interior experience. Beyond rational knowledge and calculations, the man is constituted by a *negativity which is useless* which obliges him to question himself in the form of the experience-at-the-limit. The interior experience is a transcending of the self and a confrontation with one’s own finitude, more precisely it is the transformation of the self in an experience of the limit. This exposure of one’s own finitude becomes communication as a wound which involves a departure from the self and happens not only through the word, but also through eroticism, ecstasy, sacrifice, and laughter: “communication involves the sovereignty of those who communicate between themselves, and, conversely, sovereignty involves communication... We have to say

clearly that sovereignty is always communication, and communication is always sovereign" (Bataille 1978, 157-158). The subject needs to decipher the sacred concealed in the profane, the ambiguity of the sacred (Caillouis 2006) in an exposure or self communication on the limit between himself and the others. Consequently, the subject is the experience-at-the-limit of self-exposure, he is the communication of the meanings which constitute him permanently at all the layers of his being. As Bataille put it, "subjectivation is not just the object of discursive knowledge, it communicates itself from the subject to the subject through a sensitive contact of emotion: it thus communicates itself in laughter, in tears, in celebration..." (Bataille 2004, 53). The subject is either sovereignty or nothingness, it is a questioning of the man as an experience-at-the-limit.

5.2. The self-affection of life as an experience of the body

Michel Henry shows, from a phenomenological perspective on theology, that through embodiment, intentionality as a structure of consciousness is replaced with self-affection, with the experience of life. Life is a donation through the phenomenon of *embodiment* which transforms us from spatial physical bodies in transcendental subjective bodies: "the transcendental body which opens us towards the felt body, either or own or that of exterior things, is based on a more originary corporeality, transcendental in an ultimate, non-intentional, non-sensitive way, whose essence is life" (Henry 2003, 176). These bodies occupy a space which is experience, because this place is Life itself, in which inter-subjectivity is not just the interaction of subjects, but is the same life which constitutes us as bodies through the self-affection of each and every one of us. We speak here of a phenomenalization of life which transforms us in bodies, which dislodges us from the physical space in order to enable us to inhabit the space inhabited by Life.

5.3. Desire as an experience of the limit

In a phenomenology of life which looks for an ontological justification, Renaud Barbaras interprets the correlation between man and the world through desire. Desire, as an originary intentionality, reveals us a meaning of life which involves at the same time the union and separation between the subject and the world: „...we discover at the heart of the subject an affective dimension-desire-that ek-statically projects the subject towards the world, so as to make it appear in conformity with its irreducible transcendence" (Barbaras 2012, 100). Intentionality is not just the origin of meaning, but it becomes a desire which is the sign of a lack, of an ontological absence which leads to satisfaction being constantly postponed. The correlation between the

subject and the world, expressed through desire, shows an ontological kinship between the subject and the world, „life is, at its core, phenomenalization - that is, circumscription (individuation) of the being-and this circumscription is as much the work of the world (delimitation) as it is the subjective activity of unconcealment” (Barbaras 2012, 107). A sense of belonging which does not involve inclusion or dynamical inhabitation: “...the ontological kinship without which the relation between subject and world would not be possible, and the distance or separation without which the relation would not be necessary. The determination of the subject by desire rigorously corresponds to the phenomenological correlation” (Barbaras 2012, 108). The subject makes the world appear because his being emerges from the being of the world, they are made of the same ontological texture, and desire is a form of self-realization or of self-fulfillment through the other. Subjectivation is life itself as a perpetual dynamic of desire for the other, which is in fact a search for the self in the other.

6. Conclusions

Eliade was right to open up the game of hypotheses in the framework of the meta-experience which is the sacred-profane dialectic. The anthropology practiced by Eliade shows us that the ontological structure through which the man can be captured is the experience of the paradoxical limit between a-formal - formal; sacred-profane; miracle - ordinary; self - other. The man is this experience of the limit both in the sacred-profane dialectic and in the contemporary philosophical interpretations which are derived from the original ontology in which we find the nostalgia of life in the Cosmos, of being an anthropocosmos, and of experiencing Life. The contemporary approaches discussed shows us that beyond the subject, we can start re-thinking the man. The comparative analysis of the modes of subjectivation has shown us that the experience of the paradoxical limit does not disappear, but is metamorphosed or concealed in modernity. It is important to recover it, to think it, to experience it in order to not lose out humanity. We can thus affirm that our initial hypothesis is confirmed.

If we revoke the subject, what comes after the subject? An answer is given by Jean-Luc Nancy: “(b)ut in lieu of the subject, there is something like a place, a unique point of passage. It’s like the writer for Blanchot: place of passage, of the emission of a voice that captures the “murmur” and detaches itself from it, but that is never an “author” in the classical sense. How might one name this place?” (Nancy 1991, 99). Who is the man: the experience of a paradoxical limit? the body which feels Life? or the ontological self-desire? We can think of the requirement of the physical presence of God at mass in the formula *hoc*

est enim corpus meum (this is my body). Christ materializes himself to enable men to join him, but by doing this he does not cancel neither his god-like nature, nor his humanity.

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