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ESCAPING THE TERROR OF HISTORY. MIRCEA ELIADE AND KARL LÖWITH ON THE LINEAR TIME

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Abstract: The article attempts to elaborate a comparative analysis of Mircea Eliade's and Karl Löwith's linear time notions. Despite many and far-reaching similarities of their concepts, the existing research lacks such comparison. Both authors present the perception of time as a line as an image that originated in Judaism and was later introduced to the Western culture by the dissemination of Christianity. Both contrast this notion with a primordial scheme of cyclical time that had prevailed within ancient or archaic societies. Eliade and Löwith emphasize the significance of the linear image for the birth and evolution of Western historical reflection, initially in the form of the theology of history and later as the paradigm of historicism. They consider the latter the leading cause of the Western spiritual collapse, which manifested in the twentieth century in existentialistic nihilism or totalitarian barbarity. The article aims to specify all those convergences by indicating an anthropological dimension of both authors' thoughts. It will lead to outlining Eliade's and Löwith's disparate propositions of remedies for the said spiritual crisis. Furthermore, the presentation of both thinker's views on linearity will make it possible to present Eliade's complex understanding of Judeo-Christianity and address some controversies that arose around it.

Key words: Mircea Eliade; Karl Löwith; linear time; cyclical time; religion; history; postsecularism

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1. Introduction

Throughout his life, Mircea Eliade (1907-1986) has achieved international recognition, which is rarely bestowed upon authors of Eastern European origins. Apart from his numerous and widely-read literary works, it is mostly his contribution in the field of history of religion that earned him the place among the most prominent and influential Romanian intellectuals in the twentieth century, such as Nae Ionescu, Constantin Noica, Emil Cioran, or Eugène Ionesco. The importance of Eliade's concepts of *sacrum*, archaic man, his notion of the eternal return or *homo religiosus* can hardly be overestimated. Not only have they challenged the positivist paradigm in the studies of religion, but also undermined the self-satisfied secular Western mid-twentieth-century mentality by engaging it with the vision of irreducible human religious experience. This contribution has been, however, often criticized as burdened by Eliade's past: his youthful support for the Iron Guard movement and the autocratic Romanian regime in the forties of the twentieth century. One particular aspect of his thought brought into question is the critical concept of linear time as the historical distortion of archetypical cyclical religious perspective. The article aims to reflect upon this aspect by analytically comparing it with the thought of Karl Löwith (1897-1973), a post-secular German philosopher, who also considered the introduction of the linearly perceived history a structural condition for the decline of Western spirituality and the rise of modern nihilism.

There are numerous reasons for such comparison. First are the similarities in both authors' biographies: close time of their lives and work, marked by the experience of two world wars and emigration. Both of them were under the strong influence of the anti-rationalistic and existentialist philosophy of life: Löwith was a student and initially a close friend of Martin Heidegger (this relation eroded after the former's emigration and the latter's support for NSDAP), while Eliade was a disciple of Nae Ionescu, inspired by his concept of Trăirism. Both took part in the intellectual discussion group called Eranos, established in the thirties of the twentieth century and dedicated to humanistic and religious studies. Nevertheless, most importantly, they both share a far-reaching reserve towards the phenomenon of history, which is best expressed by their similar views on the transition from circular to linear comprehension of time, introduced by Judaism and Christianity. Given all the above confluences, both biographical and conceptual, it is surprising that Eliade's and Löwith's thoughts have not been compared in any monograph or even a comprehensive article. One rare example of a study that merely thematizes the similarities between both thinkers'

outputs is Arkadiusz Górnisiewicz's Polish monograph *Nowoczesność, nihilism, polityka. Wokół myśli Karla Lowitha* (Górnisiewicz 2014, 89-98) Nonetheless, Górnisiewicz only mentions those similarities and does not attempt to perform any comprehensive comparative analysis. Thus, this paper aims to fill this gap, at least regarding the said views on linear time, and to provide their comparison, which will indicate not only the structural convergences and divergences but also both thinker's anthropological orientation and remedies proposed by them for the 'terror of history'. This comparative analysis will focus mainly on two works, which originated at almost the same time, were released in the same year (1949), and ponder the issue of history directly: Eliade's *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return* (originally published in French as *Le Mythe de l'eternel retour: archétypes et repetition*) and Löwith's *Meaning in History* (published in English). The same year of publications may suggest that both work's ideas were conceived independently. Nevertheless, it is worth indicating that Eliade mentions Löwith's *Meaning in History* in the footnote references added to the English translation of *Cosmos and History* (Eliade 1959a, 150). Moreover, the correlation of Löwith's and Eliade's notions will allow addressing the charges against the latter for being burdened by his past, which is thought by some to translate into the alleged anti-Judaism of his concept of history.

2. Löwith: Philosophy of History as the Distortion of Eschatological Linearity

The comparative analysis shall begin with an outline of Löwith's views, for they thematize the discussed matter of linear time more directly. The purpose of his *Meaning in History* is to demonstrate how the Western comprehension of history evolved over the centuries. Löwith undertakes two methodological measures to achieve this task. First, he treats the Western understanding of history holistically. He thereby suspends (but not ignores) the distinction between the Judeo-Christian theology of history and the post-Enlightenment secular philosophy of history (Löwith 1949, 2-3). The second measure, interesting and hermeneutically productive, is that he presents the evolution retrospectively, first describing relatively contemporary concepts and then discussing the older ones, thus gradually deconstructing prevalent notions and history images as well as exposing their unobvious genesis.

Despite this retrospective approach, in the *Introduction* to his work, Löwith makes some general observations on any attempt to comprehend history, which set a peculiar chronological starting point for his narrative. He distinguishes and contraposes two schemes of perceiving time and, as a result, history. The first that can be found in

ancient Greek mythology and cosmology presents time as a natural repeating cycle, in which the same world's phases reoccur. In the case of historical phenomenons, it does not ask about their singular meaning but instead tends to seek in them a trace of cosmic *logos* that proves the eternity and stability of reality. Löwith claims that this optic essentially excludes any historical change as we understand it today because for the Hellens, everything, including floating fates of states and individuals, manifests the permanence of ontological cosmic unity (Löwith 1949, 5-6). Even the significant events turn out to be merely virtual deviations of the natural order that eventually only evidence its rhythm. This view may appear odd and invalid, regarding that ancient Greece is considered the cradle of historiography. Löwith, however, argues the prominent ancient historians, instead of seeking any self-explanatory 'meaning' of history, rather attempted to describe the past deeds in the context of divine fluctuation of *hybris* and *nemesis* (the case of Herodotus), natural growth and decline cycle of any political structure (Polybius), or as the pragmatical teaching of politics that reveal the unchangeable human nature (Thucydides) (Löwith 1949, 6-9).

The second time conceptualization scheme was introduced by Judaism and is linear. Time and history are perceived as a progressive line that stretches from the creation to the final stage, understood initially in Hebraic religion as the fulfillment of God's promise to the chosen people. The accent is thus put not on the present but on the future, which attributes a particular purpose and meaning to the historical structure itself. The Judaic linear scheme has been modified by Christianity, which considers the life of Jesus the dividing moment of history that reveals God's plan. Therefore, the history after Christ appears as *interim*, a peculiar time between complete revelation and the last judgment (Löwith 1949, 184). Nevertheless, Löwith states that the finalistic and futuristic essence of Judaism is maintained in Christianity. The latter also focuses on the future and expects it to manifest the true historical purpose, either as an individual path towards salvation or by the concept of parusia and the end of all worldliness. It is worth mentioning that the idea of strong contraposing of Hellenic circularity and Jewish linearity, as it can be seen in Löwith's concept, was criticized by Arnaldo Momigliano (Momigliano 1966).

According to Löwith, those two frames exhaust any possible conceptualization of historical time. He also claims that due to Christianity's spread in the late Roman Empire, the linear one became prevalent in the West and fueled the evolution of its historical imagination. The decisive factor was the introduction of purpose, initially perceived as religious *eschaton*, which distinguished history as a conceptualizable entity from the natural order. For Löwith, the *eschaton* is "comparable to the compass which gives us the orientation

in space, and thus enables us to conquer it" and "gives the orientation in time by pointing to the Kingdom of God as the ultimate end and purpose" (Löwith 1949, 18). This horizon and its asking about the purpose predetermines even the nineteenth- and twentieth-century claims that history is meaningless, "for it is Hebrew and Christian thinking that brought this colossal question into existence" (Löwith 1949, 4). The indication of eschatological linearity as the inherent specificity of Western comprehension of history allows Löwith to present hermeneutically how the post-Enlightenment reflection is dependant on the older theological paradigm. The German thinker aims to prove that most of the notions and categories of the philosophy of history are nothing else than secularised Judeo-Christian images: the vision of progress emerges thereby as a transfiguration of salvific hope, whereas the belief in historical rationality is a new form of providential thinking. This idea was criticised by Hans Blumenberg (1999, 35-45), who indicated the structural divergence between the notion of progres and eschatology. Löwith and Blumenberg debate on the issue is comprehensively presented by Robert M. Wallace (1981).

Thus the secular perspective appears as a more or less aware heir of the religious tradition, even though the first attempted initially to differentiate itself from the latter.

It does not, however, mean that Löwith perceives the transition between both paradigms as a simple continuation process. Following Franz Overbeck's historical-theological observations (Overbeck 1875, 158-230), Löwith underlines Christianity's outer-worldly and transcendent specificity. Although it attributes the purpose to history, it focuses on trans-historical salvation, which comes after the end of time (individual or universal). Moreover, due to the final specificity of Jesus's revelation, Christianity does not expect any significant change to occur within world-historical reality. This attitude is best expressed by Augustine's vision of earthly pilgrimage (Augustine 1972, 906-918) as Church's historical *modus vivendi* after Christ, which was dominant during the middle ages. An opposing tendency manifests in the secular philosophy of history, which renounces the biblical narrative. Its strive for universal humankind's progress transforms the initially transcendent eschatological purpose into an immanent one, which is to be realized through and within history. According to Löwith, this shift originated paradoxically within the theologian paradigm, namely in the concept of Joachim of Fiore, a twelve-century Calabrian abbot, who claimed that by mystical exegesis of John's *Apocalypse*, he acquired the salvific meaning of history as a trichotomous revelation of divine persons. The first stage revealed the Father through the Old Testament law, the second – the Son by establishing universal Church and discovering human spiritual vocation. Joachim asserted that the revelation of the Holy Spirit would conclude the process. This moment

marks the third era, which due to the rejection of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and introduction of the monastic spiritual life, is considered by Joachim the earthly realization of God's Kingdom. Löwith indicates that although Joachim's aim was purely religious and non-revolutionary, his concept has renewed the long-forgotten chiliast tendencies and radically transformed the Western historical imagination by terrestrializing its eschatological orientation. Historical fulfillment from this moment on is set not in the last judgment as a transhistorical event but rather in an earthly and historical epoch that precedes it (Löwith 1949, 145-159).

Thereby for Löwith, Joachim's terrestrialized eschatology set the pattern for post-Enlightenment philosophers who rejected any religious reference and aimed to present humanity's universal history (Löwith 1949, 91-114). Authors such as Voltaire, Lessing, Herder, or Condorcet began to advocate for progress as an entirely secular realization of historical purpose. Nonetheless, Löwith particularly stresses Hegel's role in this process – he adopted the rhetoric of theological perspective in his philosophy of history while intentionally immanentizing its goals, elevating thus the historical process to the highest importance, or even sacralizing it (Löwith 1949, 52-59). One ought to observe that at this point, the narrative of *Meaning in History* converges with the implications of Löwith's other famous book, *From Hegel to Nietzsche* (Löwith 1953). In this work, Löwith presents Hegelianism and its later decline as the founding moment for the radical shift in nineteenth-century thought. One of the most critical aspects of this shift is the abandonment of purely contemplative attitudes in favor of an active strive to achieve historiosophical and political purposes, even on the path of the revolution or direct use of violence. The transformation eventuated in the birth of both Marxist doctrine and nihilism inspired by Nietzsche, both of which renounce any direct moral reference, thus paving the way for totalitarian regimes' barbarity. Therefore, a conclusion, which can be drawn from both of Löwith's major works, is that Western historical consciousness's evolution relies upon the secularization and terrestrialization of the Judeo-Christian, linear perspective. This adaptation turns out to be an abuse or distortion of the original transcendent sense of eschatology by modern attempts to realize crypto-eschatological, historically immanent purposes that eventually led to the twentieth century's tragedy.

3. Eliade: Archetypical Cycle, Historical Theophany, and Modern Dispair

"Had we not feared to appear overambitious, we should have given this book a subtitle: *Introduction to a Philosophy of History*" (Eliade

1959a, XI). Those first words of *Cosmos and History* alone seem to be a sufficient legitimization for comparing Eliade's notion of history and the above-discussed Löwith's narrative. Unlike Löwith, however, Eliade's approach does not rely on "the speculative analysis of the historical phenomenon" but on the broader concept of archaic societies and religious experience. As Eliade claims, most archaic peoples are aware of linear time, albeit they perceive it negatively, as a mere sequence of meaningless events that causes the 'terror of history.' Traditional societies tend to avoid linearity by the image of a primordial, mythical time, which can be repeated through participation in religious rites. This repetition constitutes the 'eternal return' of mythological symbols and figures, to which the archaic man refers himself, explaining and justifying thereby everyday life's pain and misery (Eliade 1959a, 95-102). Thus, for Eliade, both time conceptualization structures, the linear and cyclical, appear as inherent anthropological features, available to the human being in any historical circumstances. This orientation differentiates Eliade's stance from Löwith's, who seems to stress the historical appearance of linearity and reflects on circularity only in the context of European antiquity. Furthermore, the tension between linear and cyclical time in Eliade's perspective corresponds with his other concept, namely the opposition of profane and sacred, which results in notions of *homo religiosus* and hierophany as universal descriptions of religion's phenomenon (Eliade 1959b).

Nonetheless, despite this general 'anthropological' approach, Eliade also reflects on time perception's historical transformations by considering the particular novelty introduced by Judaism, which brings his stance very close to Löwith's. According to Eliade, by interpreting catastrophes as Jahwe's wrath or 'negative theophany,' Jewish prophets were the first to break the archaic-primitive cycle of mythic nature and emphasize that history is a directed linear sequence of unique events. For the first time, God appeared as not only establishing the archetypical-cyclical ritual but also as intervening in history, thus making the historical facts human 'situations' referred to God (Eliade 1959a, 103-104). It does not eradicate the archetypical structure entirely. First, the new perspective was initially popular only among the elite, whereas the popular strata refused to adopt it, which is evidenced by the periodic returns to Baal's and Astartes's cults. Second, historical theophany still explains profane history's misery and enables to abolish it through the vision of salvation. Nevertheless, Judaic eschatology transforms religious temporal experience structurally, for it transposes the salvific element from the primordial, repetitive moment of the cosmic drama to the future, final and thus unique one. It changes the perception of all historical events by making them necessary stepstones in God's plan (Eliade 1959a, 106-108). Therefore, one can indicate a

strong resemblance to Löwith's narrative: Judaic eschatology's futurism enables to abolish history by 'conquering' it and not by just ignoring it.

Eliade states that linear vision gradually became predominant among Israelites through religious education in the centuries following the Babylonian exile. Eliade's accent on the post-exile fate of Judaism resembles another German postsecular thinker's ideas, Jacob Taubes, who in his *Occidental Eschatology* considered the experience of being expelled fundamental for the development of eschatological thought (Taubes 2007, 40-47). Simultaneously, in this paper's perspective, one has to note a far-reaching convergence between Taubes's and Löwith's stance.

Later, it was adopted and enhanced by Christianity, particularly by Augustinian doctrine, thus superseding the cyclical or semi-cyclical historiosophical notions of late antiquity. It does not, however, mean that the archetypical scheme was eradicated – as Eliade proves, the very structure of Christianity enabled its peculiar coexistence with eschatological linearity. First, ecclesiastical liturgy (Eliade 1963, 168-169) and the individual experience of *metanoia* follow the pattern of eternal return, allowing history to "be regenerated, by and through each individual believer, even before the Saviour's second coming, when it will utterly cease for all Creation" (Eliade 1959a, 129-130). Second, by gaining popularity among European agrarian societies, the new religion adopted many archetypical motives of paganism, thus creating 'cosmic Christianity,' which still allowed popular strata to live according to the natural cycle (Eliade 1963, 170-173). Moreover, Eliade indicates the influence of astrological and alchemical concepts, especially in the late middle ages, which complemented the general eschatological-linear worldview (Eliade 1959a, 144).

Despite this, the linear image slowly but decisively gained its independence through the vision of progress. Like Löwith, Eliade attributes a significant role in this process to Joachim of Fiore, in whose writings the linearity becomes coherent as an integral element of historical eschatology (Eliade 1959a, 145). In the early modern era, the birth and advance of natural sciences provoked authors such as Bacon, Pascal, and Leibniz to advocate explicitly for the notion of infinite universal human progression, which lost its original religious references and later even acquired naturalistic entrenchment in evolutionism in the nineteenth century. Thus a new variant of linearity arose, which Eliade labels as 'historicism.' In other works, he names Kant as its precursor (Eliade 1991, 32); however, in *Cosmos and History,* he underlines the importance of Hegel's views, whose attempt to 'reconcile himself with his own historical moment,' justifies the course of history as the necessity and manifestation of the universal spirit. Later, Marxism strips this perspective of any metaphysical and

transhistorical significance by making it 'the epiphany of the class struggle' (Eliade 1959a, 147-149).

Through the lens of historicism, the human being considers itself 'consciously and voluntarily' historical in order to affirm its capacity to shape reality. This viewpoint forces humanity to face an entirely new situation. On the one hand, it revives the potential fear from 'bare' and profane linear history, which any unexplainable catastrophe can cause. On the other, it precludes the traditional means to mitigate this terror: not only the archaic-mythical circularity but also the religious-eschatological reference. For Eliade, this position is best expressed by existentialism's pessimism in the twentieth century, which emphasizes temporality and contingency as the primary human constitutions, leading eventually to increasing despair (Eliade 1959a, 162). Eliade indicates new means undertaken by humanity to assuage this sense: the rising popularity of literary fiction that allows escaping from historical profanity (Eliade 1963, 191-192), or the quasi-eschatological interpretation of Marxism, which adumbrate the future golden age (Eliade 1959a, 149, 152). Moreover, due to the unbearableness of historicist orientation, he anticipates the renaissance of cyclical thinking, which already can be evidenced by the reappearance of ideas such as Nietzschean eternal return or notions of circularity within the political economy (Eliade 1959a, 145-146). Such a renaissance appears as possible when one considers that historicism's linearity is predominant only among the intellectual elite, whereas the vast majority of humankind, even in Western societies, is still rural and by this virtue functions within traditional, more or less cyclical imaginations (Eliade 1959a, 152).

4. The Anthropological Dimension and Remedies for Historicism

The above outlines of Löwith's and Eliade's concepts of linear time prove their far-reaching similarities. Not only both authors present convergent visions of Western historical consciousness's transformation, which can be summarized as a trichotomous sequence (primordial cyclicality – eschatological linearity – secular, infinite linearity), but even mark almost precisely the same figures as stepstones in this process (Jewish prophets, Augustine, Joachim of Fiore, Hegel, and Marx). Furthermore, both point out and criticize nihilism as the outcome, whether in totalitarian barbarity or existentialist despair. Nevertheless, at least two crucial differences seem to emerge from the comparison. First is the overtone of both comprehensions – Löwith appears to consider the whole process as the distortion of Judeo-Christian eschatology, whereas Eliade seems to favor archaic circularity and undermine the linearity in general. The

second difference relies upon the methodological background. Löwithian secularisation's theorem is strictly Eurocentric and can be designated as 'philosophical history of the philosophy of history,' which lacks any anthropological reference. On the contrary, Eliade's concept has a robust anthropological foundation in the notion of *homo religiosus*, if not even an ontological one concerning the category of sacred (Cordoneanu 2006; Rennie 2007; López 2020, 19-20). As such, it aims to present the process in the scope of universal religious experience. As it shall now be proven, however, both differences cannot be treated as valid in their eternity.

Regarding the first, Eliade's attitude towards linearity is not utterly critical and even appears as openly positive when it comes to Christianity. Apart from the latter's surprising coexistence with cyclical images (in the above-mentioned forms of its popular 'cosmic' adaptation, liturgy, or *metanoia*), Eliade underlines its transhistorical specificity and that it does not destroy the archetypical symbolism, adding to it new meanings instead. He claims that Christianity, as the 'religion of "fallen man"' (Eliade 1959a, 162), aims to redeem time and history and open them to eternity by maximal, nontemporal ontoligisation of a particular moment (*kairos*, incarnation), which appears as the most radical hierophany. Therefore, Eliade concludes that 'Judeo-Christianity does not lead to historicism, but to a theology of History,' and 'historicism as such is a product of the decomposition of Christianity,' resulting from the loss of faith in the transhistorical reality (Eliade 1991, 161, 167-170). As for Löwith, prominent interpreters (Habermas 1963; Blumenberg 1999, 36) claim that his concept's actual gravity point lies not in the secularisation of eschatology but in the shift from the ancient circularity to the linear perspective in general. Moreover, they state that due to this conditioning, Löwith's work as a whole reveals its anthropological specificity, which leads to the second of the aforementioned differences.

In his minor writings that followed the publication of *Meaning in History*, Löwith aimed to specify his secularisation theorem by giving an alternative but complemental description of Western culture's transformation, which stresses the anthropological or ontological aspect of the process. This narrative depicts how the perception of the surrounding world as the human point of reference was changing in European history. As in the secularisation theorem, the classical Hellenic cosmology provides the initial point: Greeks viewed the surrounding natural world as eternal and divine in itself, transcendent in its circular permanence to the volatile human fate. The world was thereby an object of theoretical contemplation. This notion was later challenged by the biblical doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*. The world ceased to be perceived as divine, for it appeared as a dependant on God and accidental in itself. However, due to its relation to the transcendent

absolute, it still provided a relatively stable reference-point for humanity. This image began to break in the early modern era, first due to voluntaristic theology, then astronomical discoveries, which shattered the stability and paved the way for the scientific perspective. As already explicitly formulated by Francis Bacon, it treated the natural world as essentially alien to the human being but, on the other hand, able to be subdued through technical, instrumental manipulation. Therefore, in the seventeenth century, a conviction typical later for existentialism arose that the surrounding world is a mere background for human existence, deprived of its reality (Löwith 1985a, 172, 177). Löwith states that this sense of disharmony also affected human self-consciousness, which is evident in Pascal's essays, who, instead of writing on stabile human 'nature,' was concerned with intricate human 'condition' (Löwith 1966, 25). Later, the Enlightenment saw the efforts to mitigate by focusing on the utterly spiritual domain of history. Nevertheless, those efforts were also doomed to fail, for they gave birth to nineteenth-century historicism, which instead of providing a stable point of reference, further shattered the worldview by fragmenting it into a multitude of incompatible 'historical worlds' (Löwith 1969, 9-11).

The indication of historicism as the outcome of the process of losing stable, ontological orientation once more proves the convergence between Löwith's and Eliade's stances. Moreover, like Eliade, Löwith claims that historicism was an unripe form of existentialism, the latter of which appeared after the traumatic disillusion of the early twentieth century, leading to the petrifying prevalence of nihilism among Western societies (Löwith 1966, 18-19). Löwith states that the dominance of historicism made modern humans extremely sensitive to historical subtleties and disconcertingly 'dull' to the permanent or natural aspects of their existence. He underlines that human beings live *in* history but not *from* history, that they have history, but it is not a historical existence separated from nature. The modern 'want to orient oneself on history, while tossed around in the midst of it, would be like wanting to hold on to the waves in time of shipwreck' (Löwith 1969, 13-14, 17, 33). Löwith advocates thereby for counterbalancing historicism by turning towards a more anthropological perspective. It does not, however, mean any naturalistic anthropology focused on the biological aspect. Instead, his proposition is more 'cathartic,' for it demonstrates how seemingly 'unnatural' things, such as work or money, have become natural human capabilities. Such a historical analysis counterintuitively allows overruling the opposition between nature and culture and demonstrating that the human being has little changed over centuries and that it was as human in its beginnings as it will be at its presumed end (Löwith 1969, 12). This peculiar, historically oriented anthropology reveals that the truth about the human being is quite simple, banal, and perhaps 'unphilosophical.' Therefore, against naturalism, historical

pathos, and nihilistic irony, Löwith proposes stoic-inspired restraint and skeptical 'laconism' as remedies (Löwith, Strauss 2001, 613).

The above-described, peculiar anthropological orientation of Löwith's thought enables to address both authors' views on potential overcoming, or at least mitigating the negative implications of historicism. It constitutes the third difference between their concepts, which is an evident one, unlike the two previously indicated. Löwith's proposition is enigmatic and apophatic, which concurs with the general pessimistic overtone of his works. In his writings, he often admits that Western culture's transformations may provoke a sense of complete resignation (Löwith 1953, 9). Furthermore, one can see that his propositions have Eurocentric specificity, for they are inspired solely by Western intellectual heritage (Löwith 1985b, 195). The situation is entirely different when it comes to Eliade, whose immersion in the studies of religions and concept of archetypical circularity result in far more optimistic, positive, and culturally inclusive ideas. This approach translates into the two already mentioned notions. The first is the generally positive evaluation of Christianity, which emphasizes its cosmological or transhistorical aspect. The second is the indication of popularity and relative durability of cyclical symbols, which, as he predicts, may provoke a rebellion against the modern terror of history in the future. Apart from those, Eliade outlines the third possibility directed at the primitive or Oriental religious experience. In the *Foreword* to *Cosmos and History*, he argues that Western philosophy "is dangerously close to 'provincializing' itself" because it arrogantly refuses to acknowledge alternative viewpoints and solutions that originated in other cultures (Eliade 1959a, XII). In *Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries*, Eliade goes as far as to conduct a thought experiment in which he juxtaposes Western historicist-existential mentality and anxieties that it causes versus perspectives of archaic consciousness and Hinduism. The result is somewhat surprising, for it demonstrates the limitation and one-sidedness of modern spirituality, which stubbornly clings to its notions of temporality and profane linearity. Thereby, Eliade suggests that the non-Western ideas provide challenging perspectives for the West, which may stimulate the latter's spiritual rebirth. Furthermore, he expresses the hope that such an intercultural, ecumenical dialogue "might well constitute the point of departure for a new humanism, upon a world scale" (Eliade 1957, 231-245).

5. Conclusion

The above analytical comparison demonstrates the intellectual proximity between Eliade and Löwith concerning their comprehension of linear time and Western culture's transformations. Both authors

oppose historical linearity with primordial circularity. Both present structurally similar narratives on time perception's evolution, often accentuating the same decisive moments and prominent figures. Eliade and Löwith also indicate historicism and existentialist nihilism as negative outcomes of this process. Finally, both thinkers' concepts appear as having anthropological foundations, yet with different origins and orientations. Eliade's approach results from his research on various religions, whereas Löwith's historical-anthropological views belong to the paradigm of German postsecularism and, as such, predominantly address contemporary and Western philosophical debates. This distinction implicates their divergent responses towards the criticized historicistic nihilism. Löwith advocates for a stoical-skeptical restraint and 'laconicism,' which are to enable reconciliation between historical and naturalistic perspectives. As for Eliade, his proposition points out the durability of cyclical symbolism in both Western and non-Western cultures and outlines the possibility of an inclusive comparative approach that could lead to a universal vision of humanism.

Moreover, the comparison of Löwith's and Eliade's notions of historical linearity casts a new light on specific accusations against the latter. Many scholars emphasize the burdening past of Eliade: his support for the Iron Guard and the Romanian regime in the thirties and forties of the last century, and especially his numerous antisemitic comments from that time. Those authors claim that after the second world war, this antisemitic attitude morphed into anti-Judaism of his comprehension of historical linearity, in which Jews (disguised by the term 'Hebrews') are to be responsible for the destruction of archetypical cyclical images and the rise of despised modern historism (Strenski 1987, 104-128; Dubuisson 1993, 163-276; Volovici 1996; Laignel-Lavastine 2008, 342-352). However, apart from the aforementioned passages, in which Eliade presents Judeo-Christian linearity in a more positive light, the above-presented comparison may, at least to some extent, undermine such accusations. Surprisingly enough, a counter-argument is provided by the biography of Löwith. Being of Jewish ancestry, he was forced to leave Germany in 1934, despite that he had fought before as an eighteen-year-old volunteer during First World War and that his family had converted to Protestantism already in the former generation. His emigration was long and initially marked by poverty or even peril: at first, he moved to Italy, then to Japan, to settle eventually in the United States; he returned to Germany as late as 1952. Thus, given that he was a victim of Nazi antisemitism, any accusations against him for being disguisedly antisemitic would seem to be at least implausible, despite that his stance on Judeo-Christianity is highly convergent with the one of Eliade. Of course, Eliade's dark past can not be overlooked and ought to be acknowledged. On this account, one can not deny the contribution of

mentioned critics of Eliade. However, it does not have to disqualify his views on history completely. Perhaps, in this case, it would be suitable to suspend historical suspicion to some extent and instead follow a more philosophical-hermeneutical approach, which separates the author's biography from the text and seeks what the interpreted idea can offer to a contemporary interpreter.

In such a perspective, similarities between Löwith's and Eliade's comprehensions of historical linearity reveal the latter's proximity to the general orientation of postsecular thought. Postsecularism emphasizes the significance of religion for Western spirituality regarding both its evolution and modern images. It concurs with the specificity of Eliade's work, for he persistently highlights the irreducibility of the religious dimension of human existence. Therefore, one can indicate an approach that is common for him and postsecular philosophy. This approach has a highly critical capacity to deconstruct many prevalent political and cultural categories or undermine contemporary ideologies' by disguising their religious backgrounds. In this sense, the ideas of Eliade, as well as those of Löwith, prove to be not only theoretically accurate but also practically helpful in one's effort to understand the intricacies of the contemporary world.

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