

## GILBERT DURAND AND THE HERMETICISM: RELIGIONISM, TRADITION AND ESOTERICISM

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### ABSTRACT

In this work we want to present Gilbert Durand's contribution to the studies of Hermeticism. In some of his work, we will highlight the aspects in which Hermeticism becomes both an object of investigation and an epistemological basis. Gilbert Durand follows paths that forge with important authors for the emergence of academic research on Western esotericism such as Henry Corbin, Antoine Faivre, C. G. Jung, among others. In *Science de l'homme et Tradition* [1975], Durand develops a series of arguments about a new epistemological organization for the sciences of man. Hermeticism and the notion of similitude play a central role in his work, and therefore Hermeticism is the new anthropological spirit, which is the subtitle of the work. In *La Foi du Cordonnier* and *Introduction à la mythodologie*, the author takes up some of these assumptions. In these works we can perceive the religionist character that until then shaped the studies on esotericism. At this time, overvalued notions, such as *tradition*, played common ground and composed the academic and non-academic discourse, as well as the avant-garde and desecularization character which these theories presented themselves, highlighting the close relationship between these subjects in an esoteric *milieu* and a strong internalism or the emic character of his speech.

**Key-words:** epistemology; imaginary; anthropology.

### RESUMO

Buscamos em nosso artigo apresentar a contribuição de Gilbert Durand para com os estudos sobre o Hermetismo. Visamos evidenciar em algumas de suas obras aspectos onde o Hermetismo se torna tanto objeto de investigação, quanto base epistemológica. Gilbert Durand segue caminhos que se bifurcam com autores importantes para o surgimento da pesquisa acadêmica sobre o esoterismo ocidental como Henry Corbin, Antoine Faivre, C. G. Jung, entre outros. Em *Science de l'homme et Tradition* [1975], Durand desenvolve uma série de argumentos acerca de uma nova organização epistemológica para as ciências do homem. Em seu escopo o Hermetismo e a noção de semelhança compreendem um papel central, sendo o hermetismo o novo espírito antropológico, subtítulo da obra. Em *A Fé do Sapateiro* e *Introdução a Mitodologia*, nosso autor retoma alguns destes pressupostos. Nestas obras podemos perceber o caráter religioso que conformava até então os estudos sobre esoterismo. Neste momento noções supervalorizadas, como a de *tradição*, desempenhavam lugares comuns e compunham o discurso acadêmico e não acadêmico, além do caráter de vanguarda e dessecularização as quais estas teorias se apresentavam, evidenciando o íntimo relacionamento entre estes assuntos em um *milieu* esotérico e um forte internalismo ou o caráter "êmico" de seu discurso.

**Palavras-chave:** epistemologia; imaginário; antropologia.

## RESUMEN

En nuestro artículo buscamos presentar la contribución de Gilbert Durand a los estudios sobre Hermetismo. Nuestro objetivo es mostrar en algunos de sus trabajos aspectos en los que el Hermetismo se convierte tanto en un objeto de investigación como en una base epistemológica. Gilbert Durand sigue senderos que se bifurcan con autores importantes para el surgimiento de la investigación académica sobre el esoterismo occidental como Henry Corbin, Antoine Faivre, C. G. Jung, entre otros. En *Science de l'homme et Tradition* [1975], Durand desarrolla una serie de argumentos sobre una nueva organización epistemológica para las ciencias del hombre. En su alcance, el Hermetismo y la noción de similitud constituyen un papel central, siendo el Hermetismo el nuevo espíritu antropológico, subtítulo de la obra. En *La Foi du Cordonnier y Introduction à la mythodologie*, nuestro autor retoma algunos de estos supuestos. En estos trabajos, podemos percibir el carácter religioso que dio forma a los estudios sobre el esoterismo hasta entonces. En este momento, las nociones sobrevaloradas, como la tradición, jugaron lugares comunes y constituyeron el discurso académico y no académico, además del carácter vanguardista y de desecularización que estas teorías presentaron, evidenciando la relación íntima entre estos temas en un *milieu* esotérico y un fuerte internalismo o el carácter emico de su discurso.

**Palabras clave:** epistemologia; imaginário; antropologia.

## INTRODUCTION

Gilbert Durand (1921-2012) was a notorious 20th century thinker and hero of the French resistance during WWII (1940-1944). He served as professor of Philosophy, Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Grenoble II. His masters were Gaston Bachelard, Henry Corbin, Mircea Eliade, and Roger Bastide. He was a member of the Eranos Circle, founder of the *Centre de Recherches sur l'Imaginaire* (CRI), who later became GRECO-CNRS, Vice President of the *Université Saint Jean de Jérusalem (USJJ)*, etc. Gilbert Durand is known for his Theory of the Imaginary and for his great transdisciplinary project (Hakl, 2014, p. 222).

In this article we will try to understand two important points in Durand's work involving Hermeticism. The first one is the "religionist" character which can be seen in some of his works and in the circles that Gilbert Durand belonged to, by considering how much these exercised a fundamental condition in his thinking related to the Hermeticism and esotericism. The second point is the way in which Hermeticism and esotericism play an adhesion of thought, a project and an agenda. This religionism is a project that we must seek to focus on amidst the ideas of Gilbert Durand and the constitutive elements belonging to the hermetic ideas.

We must first establish a preliminary understanding of what "religionism" is and what the definition of Hermeticism consists of, which is operational in the context where we are about to enter. The term "religionism" can take on several meanings. These are associated with some attitudes that can be defined as adherence to the "truth" of religion and its

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assumptions, which become the interpretive foundations of reality. This attitude that associates science and religion emerges in the cultural and academic debate in a such way that opposes the so-called *scientism*, which is the exacerbated value of the empirical character of science and its verification and demonstration procedures.

However, these nomenclatures are terms used most often as appealing, pejorative, prejudiced or generalizing “labels” attributed to both sides, namely, scientism and religionism. However, not every scientist is a scientificist and not every religion researcher is a religionist<sup>1</sup> (Krauss, 2008, p. 48).

Moving away from the value judgments of such artificial and accusatory assumptions, it may be possible to use such “labels” as a categorization of researchers' attitudes towards their objects, evidencing trends that form their views as ideological adhesions that shape their theories. In this sense, our application of the “religionism” label to an author like Gilbert Durand and some others here mentioned is not a devaluation of his intellectual work, but an effort to critically investigate what are the fundamentals or ideological backgrounds that underlie to your theoretical plan.

The notion of Hermeticism, which Gilbert Durand presented in the book *Science de l'homme et Tradition*, comprises the narratives about the god Hermes and the recurrences of the hermetic logos throughout Western history. Gilbert Durand develops a proposal for the rehabilitation or epistemological rescue of the mythological, philosophical, religious and spiritual narratives of Hermes, which becomes the founding substrate of his project to transvalue the modern episteme as a return to the traditional aspect of the West that takes the generic term “Hermeticism”<sup>2</sup>.

The reconstruction of the mythical components of Hermes Mercury, which is related to the first Hermeticism, follows a Hermesian perspective, i.e., that narratives and elements inherent to Hermes Mercury are both original and reframed throughout history (Faivre, 1994, p. 35). Gilbert Durand develops a synchronous picture of the classic myth of Hermes Mercury, by associating it with the guiding principles of the *Hermetica ratio* that will be decisive for the resumption of the hermetic episteme by the human sciences (Durand, 1999, p. 176-180; Faivre, 1995, p. 48-50).

In this paper, we return to the central theme of Vieira MA dissertation (Vieira, 2016), which involves Hermeticism and the Theory of the Imaginary by Gilbert Durand, defended in 2016. Therefore, some discussed points have now been developed more extensively in the Ph.D. thesis. However, this paper resumes the discussion with a more advanced and critical

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<sup>1</sup> Common English meaning suggests adherence to religion. The same meaning is equivalent in Spanish and unusual in Portuguese.

<sup>2</sup> For a more in-depth understanding of Hermeticism and Hermetic literature cf. Yates, 1964; Copenhaver, 1992; Fowden, 1993; Scott, 1993; Ebelin, 2007; Van Bladel, 2009; Scarpi, 2011; Festugière, 2013; Lira, 2014; Vieira, 2016.

look at Durandian theory. Furthermore, new directions and topics of discussion have encouraged us to write the present paper. These topics are *religionism* and *antihistory*. From a theoretical point of view, this paper tried to develop an untapped contribution in the 2016 text that also marks a novelty in our theoretical perspective, which we now consider more consolidated.

The goals of our present paper are to describe and analyze how religionism is presented in a block of works by Gilbert Durand, which have a character more focused on Hermeticism, mysticism and esotericism. In the discussion about the theoretical characteristics assumed and developed by Gilbert Durand that corroborate a hermetic/hermesian reading of the sciences of man, Hermetism/Hermesism serve as a foundation of these same sciences and of his own theory.

Our theoretical perspective covers the general theory of the imaginary, specifically the contribution developed by Gilbert Durand, as well as by other authors, such as J-J. Wunemberger (2007; 2010), and theory interpreters like Alberto Filipe Araújo (2010). In addition, the Western esoteric theorists, such as Antoine Faivre (1994; 1995; 1997; 2010) and Wouter J. Hanegraaff (2012a; 2012b), will be also discussed.

The developed methodology is qualitative, with a descriptive and explanatory procedure. From a phenomenological point of view, this apparatus is important to us due to the descriptive and explanatory development of the ideas and conceptions presented by Gilbert Durand. Furthermore, we will take into account the hermeneutics contribution to his interpretative apparatus.

### **DURANDIAN RELIGIONISM: A REFLECTION OF ERANOS.**

In the 1990s, the use of the terms *religionist* and *religionism* was quite popular in the studies on religion, which sought to designate a common attitude of these researchers, who identified in historical forms something “eternal and universal” (Hanegraaff, 2012b, p. 296). However, the attitude designated by the term has existed since the end of the first half of the 20th century. Since the end of WWII, intellectuals like those associated with the Eranos meetings have developed avant-garde proposals in order to identify ephemeral historical objects as something permanent, a fact that most researchers understood as impermanent or transitory.

The Eranos Circle began its activities in 1933, in Ascona, Switzerland, idealized by Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn (1881-1962), which were a fundamental personality who had close relations with characters linked to reformist and esoteric movements (Araújo; Bergmeier, 2013, 96) that decisively influenced the formation of the esoteric milieu of Eranos. It consisted, in general, of a meeting of academics, intellectuals, writers and artists from the most varied areas.

He had an avant-garde, pluralist and interdisciplinary character that provided him with speeches that would not be well accepted by academy. These themes were: esotericism, comparative religions, theosophy, Hermeticism, Gnosticism, alchemy, mythology, symbolism, etc.

The religionist aspect of Eranos, which Alberto F. Araújo and H. Bergmeier (2013) call “spiritual sense”, was analytically established by Rudolf Ritsema (apud Araújo; Bergmeier, 2013, p. 100), which we summarize as follows: “primacy phenomenological experience”; matter and spirit are fundamental “essences”, “transcendental” and “unknown”; the psyche is the stronghold of “immediate experience” and the locus of the spirit that congregates images and the material of concepts; “opening” as a distinctive feature of all living organisms, where in the human, opening to the invisible is its “religious dimension”; the human as a “polycentric complex” and “incessant process”; Western and Eastern sciences are valid within their specific aspects; and finally, human consciousness is the “Archimedes point” between the sciences of the west and the east. Thus, we can see, among other aspects, the remarkable essentialism and religionism of a *homo religiosus* as an epistemological background for Eranos, his *gnosis*, “ritual space” of “interdisciplinary reflection” (Araújo; Bergmeier, 2013, idem).

According to Hans Thomas Hakl (2014, p. 277), the meetings that started in 1952, in Cericys-la-Salle covered artistic, political and philosophical discussions in a broad sense, while in a more specific sense it had meetings where themes such as mythology, esotericism, and religion. These meetings yielded the publication of the *Cahiers de l'Hermetisme*. Among his collaborators, we can cite Ernst Benz, Henry Corbin, Gilbert Durand, Mircea Eliade, Henri-Charles Puech, and Jean Servier (Hakl, 2014, idem).

Focusing on Gilbert Durand, it is known that he participated in the second phase of the Eranos meetings and was greatly influenced by the eminently transdisciplinary, pluralistic and religionist character of these meetings. His participation spanned sixteen times between 1964 and 1988, and was introduced by Henry Corbin, who was one of his main colleagues and a true “spiritual partner” (Proulx, 2013, p. 178; Hakl, 2014, p. 222 ). One of the most prominent elements in importance of ideas are related to Hermeticism and esotericism of Gilbert Durand and comes from the meetings of Eranos, as well as from some of his participants. This element consists of the hermeneutic dimension of the imagination as production and reception of meanings that are understood as “second meanings” or double meanings that involve an “invisible”, “transcendence”, and the “sacred” (Wunemburger, 2013, p. 13).

In the Vieira master dissertation, the Durandian religionist aspect is called “the need for Hermeticism” (Vieira, 2016, p. 133), where Hermeticism becomes an epistemological source. The *Hermetica ratio* was also analyzed as a logical paradigm based on the principle of similarity and the *tertium datur* distinct from classical logic (Vieira, 2016, p. 149). In this

sense, we defend the Hermetic hypothesis in Durand as a theoretical and methodological foundation.

In the historical context, which includes the 1970 embryonic studies on esotericism, some works followed the model of studies of comparative religion, with a more essentialist trend and contact with the esoteric literature, his chains and other models of spirituality understood as counter-traditional religious forms (Carvalho, 1998, p. 57; 2006, p. 7; Faivre, 2010, p. 9). In addition, researches involving the so-called Hermetic Renaissance Tradition, which were promoted by leading researchers such as Frances Yates, Eugenio Garin, etc., (cf. Yates, 1964), contributed to creating a high profile of the terms: hermetic, Hermeticism, and hermetic tradition. These studies had as a striking characteristic the certain apologetic trend, which led them to be treated with reservations by the toughest historians (Faivre, 2010, p. 9-10).

This particular hermeneutic vision has a German romantic origin, which has its roots in Renaissance Hermeticism and narratives about Hermes Trismegistus, Alexandrian Gnosticism, alchemy and other cosmological sciences that precede the modern scientific revolution. The hermetic view of man should be understood as a *homo sacer* or *homo religiosus* are influences by Mircea Eliade and C. G. Jung. His vision of a science more focused on mysticism or and the *mundus imaginalis* shows his approach to Henry Corbin. This non-subjectivist science is not different from gnosis (Wunemburger, 2013, idem), as the process of knowledge also involves the subject of knowledge in a process of inner transformation of this subject as a verifiable science.



**Figure 1** Gilbert Durand (right), Henry Corbin (1903-1978) (center) and Antoine Faivre (1934-) (left) in Eranos, 1970s. (Source: <https://amisgilbertdurand.com/documentation/phototheque/>)

Henry Corbin was an active participant in the meetings of Eranos, between the years 1949 and 1978, having been one of the most influential names, being responsible for

taking Gilbert Durand, Antoine Faivre, David Miller, and James Hillman to these meetings (Hakl, 2014, p. 161). Corbin was greatly influenced by the Islamic studies of S. H. Nasr and by the Perennialism of René Guenón and Frithjof Schuon. His studies consist of a Phenomenology combined with hermeneutics. However, a spirituality, which can be sustained in notions like "traditional knowledge" or "sophia", were transformed in his work into philosophical concepts, where his descriptive/comprehensive hermeneutic-phenomenological procedure of Islamic esotericism it should lead the interpreter to a true spiritual path (Hakl, 2014, p. 163).

Eranos' cultic milieu<sup>3</sup> expressed, for example, in Corbin, played a decisive factor in Gilbert Durand. However, Durand does not present his hermetic and esoteric transdisciplinary vision in all his works, which constitutes his most specific religionist trend. The main reference to this aspect is undoubtedly the book *Science de l'homme et tradition*. It is here that Durand develops a more traditionalist theory center on Hermetism, theosophy, and gnosis (Wunemburger, 2013, p. 14). On the other hand, Gilbert Durand would have developed in some of his non-traditionalist works more "secular, secularized aspects, adapted to the categories of sciences" and "reducible" anthropologically to the standards of a rational science (Wunembruger, 2013, p. 14). In this non-traditionalist, or secularized group, Durand would have presented theoretical formulations more concentrated on a synthesizing and pluralist methodological agnosticism.

In a set of works, articles, seminars and conferences that comprise both his participation in Eranos and other antipositivist meetings, with themes centralized on esotericism, Gilbert Durand is committed to seeking a model of spirituality that had firm scientific bases that functioned as "counterweight" to modern positivist models (Hakl, 2014, p. 223). According to H. T. Hakl (2014, p. 163), "[...] His so-called *nouvel esprit anthropologique* (new anthropological spirit) is an attempt, on the hermeneutic, symbolic, and epistemological level, to investigate the forms in which the transcendental and imaginal sphere manifests itself.

His new anthropological spirit, the spirit of Hermes, consists of an anti-positivist and anti-historicist methodology and epistemology that aimed to remove historical and anthropological models from their reductionism by inserting myth and mythical temporality

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<sup>3</sup> This term is inserted in the problem of the cultural identity of the meetings of Eranos. Hans Thomas Hakl (2014, p. 260), for example, agrees to attribute to Eranos the expression *cultic milieu*, which must be distinct from *cult* and *sect*. The cultic milieu would be a more fluid form than the volatility of the individual cult and the collective rigidity of the sect. The application of the term to Eranos according to Hakl consists of understanding him as a heterodox group in relation to the contemporary academy where, in the first, there would be a more tolerant opening to different world views, ways of thinking or beliefs. In this group there would be no dogmatic structure or a cult of individuality. The very structure of the meetings was responsible for creating cohesion among the adherents, which means that the group does not impose or protect its adherent from any type of obligation. In such environments, all paths leading to truth and human salvation are considered legitimate. For a discussion of the uses of the term cf. Hanegraaff, 1996, p. 14.

seeking to promote deeper models and views<sup>4</sup>. It can be able to be guided for a unique transdisciplinary model of the sciences of man.

Gilbert Durand himself (*apud* Hakl, 2014, p. 260) stated that Eranos' meetings were important to develop concepts and values for his time and future science and ethics, truly as a new philosophy, a *philosophia perennis*, a new anthropological spirit, etc. Indeed, these concepts were not presented as secrecy, but as an enlightening philosophy that is currently hidden by the weak images of our time.

The rescue of these concepts and values by Eranos was understood by Giovanni Filoramo (*apud* Hakl, 2014, p. 260) as an esoteric program that he called "the hidden face of Eranos". This consisted of rescuing the Christian "tradition" in a romantic meaning as in the German *Naturphilosophie*, a magical world view deeply marked by ideas of "sympathies", "correspondences", analogies, etc.

### **ESOTERICISM, FREEMASONRY AND INNER CHURCH.**

One of the main non-academic experiences involving Eranos participants was the *USJJ*, founded in 1974. The small group that made up this non-academic adventure consisted, among others<sup>5</sup>, of Henry Corbin, Antoine Faivre, and Gilbert Durand. The main concern of this group of intellectuals was about spiritual, "esoteric" and "internal" aspects to a "true dimension of spirituality", and as a "visible manifestation of the 'Inner Church' of the spirit" (Hanegraaff, 2012a, p. 116).

The Eranos' reflection was evidently manifested in his religionist and universalistic trend of the dimensions of the "sacred", in addition to the personal involvement of these characters with one of the main modern Initiatic movements, the Freemasonry. According to Wouter J. Hanegraaff (2012a, *idem*), Henry Corbin, Antoine Faivre, Gilbert Durand and other colleagues were initiated into the Rectified Scottish Rite (RER)<sup>6</sup> of the *Grande Loge Nationale Française (GLNF)* at the Saint-Jean-des-Trois-Mortiers Lodge in Chambéry<sup>7</sup>. Antoine Faivre who, before his entry into Freemasonry, would also have been initiated into the Martinist Order (Hanegraaff, 2012, p. 341).

<sup>4</sup> Such a proposal is called *mythodology* (mitanalysis and mitocritics). Cf. Durand, 2013..

<sup>5</sup> Among the other names involved were: Richard Stauffer, Robert de Chateaubriant, Armand Abecassis, Jean Servier, Jean-François Maillard, Ernst Benz, Pierre Deghaye, Bernard Gorceix, Jean-François Marquet, Jean-Louis Viellard-Baron and Mircea Eliade (Hanegraaff, 2012, p. 342).

<sup>6</sup> Christian chivalry system created by Jean-Baptiste Willermoriz in 1778.

<sup>7</sup> Gilbert Durand would have earned the degrees of Master Mason, Scottish Master of St. Andrew (in 1975), Beneficent Knight of the Holy City (in 1978) and Grand Profes (in 1985) (cf. Gilbert Durand (1921-2012). BnF, without date. Available at: [http://expositions.bnf.fr/franc-maconnerie/grand/frm\\_220.htm](http://expositions.bnf.fr/franc-maconnerie/grand/frm_220.htm) accessed on January 25, 2020).



In this period (1960-1970) Antoine Faivre still lived his religionist period publishing around on theosophy and enlightenment, while Henry Corbin defended a model of "sovereignty of the spirit" against a secularized modern society. In his involvement with the *USJJ*, Corbin he understood as necessary the idea of a "spiritual knight" who would be responsible for preserving the "spiritual and religious" heritage of humanity against modernity (Hakl, 2014, p. 163). Corbin was heavily influenced by the Masonic/Martinist milieu having raised the last order of the RER, the *Chevalier Bienfaisant de la Cité Sainte* (CBCS), where in such order themes such as the inner church, the holy grail and the heavenly Jerusalem (Hanegraaff, 2012, idem) were commonplace. In this sense, there was an intimate relationship between the *USJJ* and the *CBCS*, where the first assumed an organizational character similar to the second; in short, the *USJJ* consisted of an intellectual nucleus of Masonic spirituality.

Still regarding his involvement with Initiatic systems, it is worth noting that in *Science de l'homme et Tradition*, Gilbert Durand calls our attention to his opinion that the preservation of the "genius of Christianity", i.e., his mystical heart, is far from the secularized church, otherwise it is "in Martinist, Masonic, or Hermetic initiatic circles" (Durand, 1999, p. 273) as a true paradox.

## THE BREAK WITH TRADITIONAL ANTHROPOLOGY.

According to Gilbert Durand (1999, p. 15), the traditional image of man consists of an anthropological model distinct from the view of modern cultural anthropology, a concept that moves towards a philosophical anthropology based on a "*philosophia perennis* of man" (Durand, 1999, p. 18). For Durand, the traditional image of man has been disfigured over the centuries by different types of obscurantisms, agnosticisms, progressivisms, historicisms, etc.

The break with the traditional image of the man referred to by Durand is linked to the catastrophic events in the history of the West. The first "catastrophe"<sup>8</sup> is the separation between man and the world or the reduction to the phenomenon. This happened in a double way: at the beginning of the 13th century, when the transition from Avicenism to Averroism (Durand, 1999, p. 21-2) in the preponderance of historical explanation, and in the "supremacy of a clerical class" (Durand, 1999, p. 25-6).

Durand follows the assertions of A-J Festugière and Corbin that the scholastic substitution between Platonic Avicenism for Aristotelian Averroism allowed a cut to be made in direct access to transcendence, imposing a new model mediated by the image of Christ while *imitating*. The achievement of the Latin Church consisted precisely in removing gnosis, restoring the monopoly of the clergy and maintaining a theological distinction between

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<sup>8</sup> Term originally used by Henry Corbin.

"knowledge" and "revelation", aspects such that the Christian mystique sought to keep together (Durand, 1999, p. 23; 1995, p. 21; Haki, 2014, p. 163). Free and individual salvation was driven by the dogmatism of the "Caesarean magisterium" for the survival of the church and the maintenance of its managerial apparatus of collective salvation (Durand, 1995, p. 17).

In this sense, two antagonistic poles are formed: the "positivism of profane knowledge" and the "world of faith" or the impossibility of a direct knowledge of transcendence, both reduced and submitted to the realities and values of history (Durand, 1999, p. 25). Thus, the history of the West consists of three guiding "myths" (dogmas or ideologies): (I) the separation of an "profane" or "positive" science (positivisms) and the value of objectivity; (II) the submission of "being" and "value" to the principles of history (historicisms) through the value of temporality; and the (III) distinction of a class or group with privileged access to the sacred (a "clerical esotericism"). For Durand, both the values of historical explanation and temporality have been widely explored by clericalisms.

The second "catastrophe" consists in the officialization of dualisms: sacred world vs. profane world and body vs. soul (from the 18th century) (Durand, 1999, p. 27). This form of binary organization supplanted the previous unitary and tripartite regimes of signatures, that is, the Renaissance episteme, where a clear break between classical episteme and rationalism was operated.

Finally, the third "catastrophe" consists of replacing the classic episteme with the "historical *ratio*" during the 19th century (Durand, 1999, p. 28-9). This moment marks the hypostasized time, a time and a sacrificed, stripped and alienated history, which plays an anthropological "save yourself who can" on the human will that exploits it existentially. These three moments of rupture are filled, according to Durand, with all sorts of recrudescence, intolerance and persecution that show contempt for the figure of the *anthropos* in general.

In these times (13th, 16th and 19th centuries) of persecution, inquisition, rejection and heresy, the traditional figure of man was deformed in "clandestine" and "concealment" (Durand, 1999, p. 32-3). For Durand, the occult has perverted and damaged the traditional image of man present in esotericism. However, this concealment should serve as a field of investigation for anthropological hermeneutics that intends to rescue its traditional image. This research should target the "rejected" by the "official history" of the West and by the official academy, where there could be a repression of the "imaginary", the imaginal and the "phantasmatic" (Chaves, 2008, p. 107).

## **ELEMENTS FOR AN ANTIHISTORY**

The resumption of studies of these rejected by the official history and academy could constitute itself as an antihistory or "antiphilosophy" hidden by these officialisms. A  
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passage from Durand serves as a script for the officers and officious of this antihistory or hidden history. For such a project,

[...] today we must oppose the very official Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Gabriel Marcel, Roland Barthes, and more distant Brunschvicg, the very officious Mircea Eliade, Gaston Bachelard, Carl-Gustav Jung, René Guenón and Henry Corbin, in the last century it is necessary to erect poets and seers against university philosophies. Nerval against Hegel, of course, but also Ballanche, Bonald, Maistre, Baader, Schlegel, to go back - against Kant in turn - to Goethe, Novalis, Schubert, Saint-Martin, Hamann, Martines de Pasqually, Swendenborg, evidently, Eckhartshausen, Etteilla, Barchusen, Ashmole, Gaffarel, Morin de Villefranche, Blake - in front of Descartes and Cartesianism - then Angelus Silesius, Paracelsus, Cornelius Agrippa, Robert Fludd, Kunrath, Valentin Weigel, Giordano Bruno, Pico Della Mirandola, Marsilio Ficino, Gilles de Viterbo, Giorgio of Venice, Patricius Patrizi, Basil Valentine, Blaise de Vigenère, Nicholas of Cusa, Nicholas Flamel, Roger Bacon, Eckhart, Tauler, Suso, and the mythical Great Alberto, for whom the occult unites, at age average before Averroism, with the official philosophy [...] (Durand, 1999, p. 33)<sup>9</sup>.

This antihistory would reveal the prominence of tradition under the veil of concealment. This seven-century concealment, says Durand (1999, p. 33-4; 1995, p. 30), is under the “sign of a triple catastrophe”: the “secularization of churches”, the “secularization of philosophy” and “History idolatry”. This procedure should continue from time to time, overthrowing the “idol of history”, inverting and reassembling tradition as countercurrents that would reorganize according to an order contrary to linear history<sup>10</sup>, if not anachronistic and synchronous against the “idolatry of progress”, since tradition does not fit the standard of historical reason.

According to Durand (1999, p. 35), this clash would reveal a series of themes and antinomies that produce between the worldviews (historical culture and tradition) historical "reasons" that he calls *derivation*. These derivations are responsible for “deformations” and “disfigurements” that one worldview derives from the other. Some of these crossings can be found in authors such as Lévi-Strauss, Lévy-Bruhl, Eliade, Jung, and Bachelard (Anes, 2008, p. 97-8; Wunemburger, 2007, p.15).

<sup>9</sup> A similar and lesser list is given in *La Foi du Cordonnier* (Durand, 1995, p. 30).

<sup>10</sup> The nonlinear principle of history was analyzed in our dissertation. On the concept of contemporaneity in Oswald Spengler cf. Vieira, 2016, p. 161.

The themes proper to traditional thought - which Durand derives from Hermeticism - consider man immersed in the cosmos, as a principle of non-separativeness (Hakl, 2014, p. 223) which involves the old idea of participation (Durand, 1999, p. 36- 7), i.e., a conjunction between "me" and "world", unlike the hegemonized Western pedagogy that teaches a definitive separation between "me" and "world"; beyond the relations of sympathy and correspondence between the kingdoms of nature; and man as a component of the universe as "linkage" and "immersion". Themes such that in anthropological structures are linked to *mystical structures* (cf. Durand, 2012). These themes are typical of astrology, the theory of signatures, the philosophy of the microcosm/macrocosm, etc. In addition, there exist components that involve medicine and natural magic, such as therapy based on the ideas of temperaments, melancholy, homologies and psychological and archetypological aspects which are linked to *schizomorphic structures* (cf. Durand, 2012).

Some structures (*mystical* and *schizomorphic*) are interconnected through Hermesian principles, bringing together the diurnal (*diaretic*) and nocturnal (*mystical*) regimes (Anes, 2008, p. 68-9). This conjunction consists of the coincidence of the opposites: the rational aspects represented by the daytime regime and the "mystical" and "synthetic" components of the nocturnal regime. Thus, the components of rationalism (reason principle, binary logic, *tertium non datur*, etc.) coincide with those of tradition (irrational, imaginal, myth, signatures, similitude, *tertium datur*, etc.) (Anes, 2008, p. 98-9).

However, the resumption of the imaginary of tradition does not mean a refusal to the models of modern sciences, but a reunion between the sciences (humanities, exact and natural sciences, etc.) and tradition (esotericism, Hermeticism, theosophy, etc.). This encounter between the "official" imaginary (diaretic-daytime) and esoteric imaginary (mystical-nighttime) could stimulate and unite deep and dynamic reflections between both models of thought (Faivre, 1994, p. 42-3). This proposal, in Durand's view, could raise standards of rigor and promote plural dialogue between the "official" and esoteric sciences, as well as between modern pedagogy and epistemology and the *Hermetica ratio*. The plural is also ethical, in the sense of directing towards otherness and diversity, which means the communicability of Hermes that encourages the living to communicate and relate contrary to the promised "solipsism", its "atomization" and "incommunicability" of empty meaning, agnosticism, abstractionism and its language devoid of heuristics (Faivre, 1994, p. 43).

These dispositions of Gilbert Durand follow theoretical formulations of perennialists like René Guenón (1886-1951) and Frithjof Schuon (1907-1998), philosophers like Marie-Madeleine Davy, A-J. Festugière, Michael Foucault and Henry Corbin. A number of other authors serve as a theoretical contribution to his program such as C. G. Jung, Martin Buber, Claude-Gilbert Dubois, Oswald Spengler, Karl Kérényi, and Antoine Faivre.

The notion of tradition, which is associated with esotericism, is extremely dear to Perennialism, since that it directs its origin to a mythical original past. This discourse often takes on a dogmatic character. However, some of its representatives present softer speeches. On the other hand, the term also takes on an eclectic meaning, where the plural (traditions) shows a flexible use, as it can also play a personal condition of justification with a tradition to which it adheres. In some cases, its use is not restricted to the past, but may refer to the present or the future, or finally, as a program (Faivre, 1997, p. 443-4).

Gilbert Durand in *Science de l'homme et Tradition* presents his traditionalism (important not to be confused with Perennialism) as a syllabus that coordinates science and tradition in a socio-cultural context, where traditional anthropology plays a non-reducing role.

### **THE HERMETICA RATIO, THE SCIENCE OF MAN AND THE RETURN OF HERMES.**

Gilbert Durand's main development about the recurrence of hermetic epistemology consists of the *hermetic ratio*, a conception that is partially published in *Eranos Jahrbuch*, XLII, of 1973, with the title *Similitude Hermétique et Science de l'homme (Hermetic Similitude and Science of Man)*, and later published in 1975 in the book *Science de l'homme et Tradition (Science of Man and Tradition)* with the title *Hermetica ratio et science de l'homme (Hermetica ratio and Science of Man)*.

The hypothesis that Durand (1999, p. 169) proposes to develop is to demonstrate the crisis in the humanities, in short, sociology and history. This crisis consists of the abandonment of the ancient hermetic principle of similitude. This crisis could only be reversed if this principle was resumed. This hermetic methodology would be the antidote against the circularity, reductionism and fragmentation of these sciences in general (Vieira, 2016, p. 137).

Following the history of Western rationality and A-J. Festugière<sup>11</sup>, Gilbert Durand lists three fundamental characteristics of Western thought: (1) the “theoretical disinterest” of man with his object of study, which implies a neglect of the “practical implications” of knowledge, what he calls “objectification”; (2) the “classifying” character of science reducing phenomena to laws, his “logical casualism”; (3) the “abstraction” character resulting from the classifying and reducing spirit to the “supreme cause” that presents itself as the highest explanation (Durand, 1999, p. 181).

With Gilbert Durand, the new science is opposed to classical rationalism<sup>12</sup> by means of a “pragmatic interest”, raising the operability of science, since in the praxis of hermetic knowledge “astrology, magic, alchemy, medicine [...] that operate concretely”

<sup>11</sup> *Hermétisme et Mystique Païenne* (1967).

<sup>12</sup> In our dissertation we have established a comparative framework between these worldviews (cf. Vieira, 2016, p. 136; p. 142).

(Durand, 1999, p. 182; Faivre, 1995, p. 68-9). In this way, generalization (abstraction) is opposed to the individual who becomes the “center of knowledge interest”.

Hermetic reason is opposed to the classic rationalism of "objectification" and "logical causality" through in what Durand calls of "principle of participation between force entities". In Hermeticism this is the principle of correspondence which in its “character of subjectivation” will be the principle of mentalism (Durand, 1999, p. 182). The correspondence principle suggests that there is a connection between laws and phenomena on different levels of being. Through this principle, the man could solve many paradoxes, from the known to the unknown. The clash between classical and hermetic logic was developed by Vieira in the final chapter of his dissertation. This clash was called by “logical parricide” (Vieira, 2016, p. 158), where the notions of similitude and sympathy play a fundamental factor.

A fourth opposing characteristic between hermetic reason and classical rationalism would consist of the statement that knowledge is not purely and simply intellectual or rational. However, it is necessary to be more than a *philosophos*, one must be an *adept*, initiated in the secret of mediation, in the doctrine of Hermes, so that the *coincidentia oppositorum* can operate. In Hermes we find, as a fact in Durand's view, the central point, mediation as similarity, ambiguity and contradiction.

According to Festugière (apud Durand, 1999, p. 184), this principle had a “progressive genesis”, first it was considered the actions and reactions of metals in metallurgy, then medicine perceived the action of plants and substances in the organs that sympathized with each other; then astrology proceeded to a “classification system of beings”. At this point, correspondences assume a complex network of associations between different levels of reality. Thus, Hermes as a revealing principle brings together the mediation between all human arts and techniques: science, medicine, chemistry, astrology, etc.

Hermes identifies the “mediator” or medium term. The unification of the epistemological cut between subject and object (me and the world) is made possible through the "mediation" of this principle, "ensuring the order of the cosmos and its destiny in the subject's unification" (Durand, 1999, p. 183). The non-separation between subject and object is one of the aspects of hermetic gnosis (Hakl, 2014, p. 223).

The similitude that was developed by Durand is defined by Alberto Filipe Araújo (2010, p. 154) as a “descriptive, phenomenological” and “qualitative” notion, which plays an important role together other notions, such as sympathy and “homology”, where the latter must be distinct from the notion of “analogy”, since that the analogy is a formal relation which indicates a “morphological equivalence”, while the similarity is a “convergence”, as in the Durandian example of the paracelsist similarity of *arché* or *arcane*, indicating an “equivalence of functions” (cf. Durand, 1999; 2003).

These notions are the starting point for understanding the “identifiable structures of stability” and the “recurrences of the imaginary” and myth in the various cycles of history (Araújo, 2010, idem). It remains, therefore, to assess what function, form, structure, coherence and constancy they play in the formation of images in certain times and societies, attesting or not to their recurrence, redundancy and durability.

Adherence to so-called traditional sciences operates in Durandian thought as an anthropological “decentralization” of the human sciences and their modern reductionisms, ethnocentrism and logocentrism (Wunemberger, 2013, p. 6). These aspects would unify and integrate the positive and scientific data to the amplifying components of the experiences of the mind, which are the data of “gnosis, theosophy, esotericism, alchemy”, and of Christian, Jewish and Islamic mysticisms (Wunemberger, 2013, idem).

The convergence between these two poles shapes in what J-J. Wunemberger (2013, p. 7) calls of “two levels of understanding”: one “exoteric” and the other “esoteric”. The first consists of dominant norms that make it possible to “deviate the methods” of the human sciences in order to appear another interpretation of symbolic production; while the second designates a “prior and tacit” agreement between different hermeneutics as a consensus and shaper of a “fraternity of affinities” with a view to integrating the data of traditions with those of modernity, where the latter confirm the former.

In Durand we see an insistence on coordinating anthropology and tradition as major lines of forces. On the one hand, the science about humanity and its cultural, biological plurality, etc., and its coordination on its symbolic productions; and on the other hand, the “archaic” component of tradition (Hermeticism, alchemy, gnosis, etc.) still present and rooted in the symbolic processes of modern man with this “hidden presence” (Wunemberger, 2010, p. 18-9). About this return to the paradigms of tradition J-J. Wunemberger (2010, idem) considers that in Durand this stance is not a “nostalgia”, a case of “conservatism” or a utopian traditionalism, so we must consider Gilbert Durand's distance from Perennialism.

These conceptions evoke a new paradigm that Alberto Filipe Araújo (2010, p. 153) calls of “historical-mythical”. This consists of a break with the paradigm of the present time and a return to the time of the foundation, i.e., to the time of cultural origins. This return makes the present time and the mythical time coincide (re)founding the imagination. This consists of “mythical redundancies” and the recurrence of the hermetic principle of similitude in different historical times.

The mythical reinterpretation of the human cosmos would work as a hermeneutical key. This means an opening of the world with profound possibilities that would not reduce the idolatry of history, the philosophies of history, and linear time, moving away from ideological<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> These ideological views are what Durand himself (2000) called “reductionist hermeneutics”.

views. The issue is limited to language, which as metalanguage is effective, through a process of interiorization of the world, to write and read a world from this sphere of interiority (Faivre, 1994, p. 43). This reading of the internalized world would be similar to what Faivre considers comparable to the Renaissance art of memory. This would be an analogical possibility, able of leading the human to profound meanings beyond the reductionism of idolatrous history and infrastructure<sup>14</sup> (cf. Durand, 2000). In this way, his search would focus on nature (Faivre, 1994, idem) as the source for these procedures.

Indeed, the works of Gilbert Durand, which comprise the decade of 1960-1970, seek exactly a crossing of foundations that are considered distinct and not subject to an association such as the inheritances of French and German thoughts. This innovative intersection would be responsible for weaving a network of transgressive assumptions and paradigms promoting a dialogue amid the tension between structuralism and hermeneutics. However, interchangeable through plurality in cultural planes (Wunemburger, 2013, p. 7). German culture is said to have preserved the Hermesian principles that manifest themselves as concrete pluralities and the principles of open and profound communication, impregnated with metalanguages and symbolic structures (signs, symbols, myths, etc.) (Faivre, 1995, p. 68). In fact, Durand was very philosophically influenced by German thinkers J. W. Goethe, O. Spengler, W. Dilthey, E. Cassirer and M. Scheler and by literary criticism about Hermann Hesse and Gustav Meyrink (Hakl, 2014, p. 223).

## CONSIDERATIONS

The Hermeticism in Gilbert Durand, according to his hypothesis, forms an organizing and transforming element of the episteme at different moments in the history of the West where science was in crisis. In these crises the principle of similitude would act as an epistemological and gnoseological help as a real help to the humanities. In his proposition, Gilbert Durand transits in a terrain extremely marked by esoteric ideas that can be associated with the Eranos paradigm and its religionist aspect. Such development places Durand in the wake of the first studies on esotericism in the 1960-1970s.

Gilbert Durand is of great importance within the history of studies on Western Esotericism, not only because he debated esoteric themes with great depth and seriousness, but also from the theoretical point of view and in the company of Henry Corbin, Mircea Eliade and Stéphane Lupasco, having influenced the pioneer of these studies, Antoine Faivre, in his first religionist phase (Hanegraaff, 2012, p. 340; p. 344). Antoine Faivre himself (1994, p. 107)

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<sup>14</sup> Social, economic, unconscious, functionalist, structuralist reductionisms, etc.



states that Gilbert Durand's theoretical efforts were important for esotericism to leave its quarantine and return to academic research in the field of humanities.

These authors were very important in their initial phase of Faivre's formulations, which had involved the ideas of “imaginal”, *mundus imaginalis* and “creative imagination” on the part of Corbin and Durand's “imaginary regimes” (Hanegraaff, 2012, p. 345), as well as Durandian reading of Hermetic principles and the epistemological aspects involving Hermeticism and the mythological figure of Hermes Mercury, in addition to other conditions of the religionist paradigm of Eranos, such as the antagonism between rationalist reductionism and aspects of the esoteric tradition. These constraints present themselves with great force in the consecrated theoretical formulation of Faivre known as the fundamental elements of esotericism (cf. Faivre, 1994, p. 12-5), mainly the ideas of “correspondences”, “imagination and mediation” and “experience of transmutation” (Hanegraaff, 2012, p. 353).

Thus, Durandian religionism consists of esoteric components that are immersed in its theory, basing its anthropological model burdened by transcendence and the sacred, and guided by the historical-mythical or mythological method. These aspects insist and resist while transgressing the ideas of progress and linearity, shaping and rescuing an imagination capable of returning a-temporally to the traditional components of the sciences of man.

Finally, we realize that Hermeticism plays a double aspect in this set of works by Gilbert Durand: both as an object of analysis and as an epistemological and theoretical apparatus that redounds or returns as a traditional foundation of the sciences of man. This is the most striking religionist aspect of Durandian theory.

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