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A phenomenological inquiry into sacred time in Hinduism

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For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Date

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY INTO SACRED TIME IN HINDUISM

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty

of

Purdue University

by

Netty Provost

In Partial Fulfillment of the

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Dedicated with love to my mother, Christy Daskoski, my father, Daryl Provost,
and best friend, Dara Hill.

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ABSTRACT

Provost, Netty. Ph.D., Purdue University, December 2016. A Phenomenological Inquiry into Sacred Time in Hinduism. Major Professor: Daniel W. Smith.

In this work, I examine the nature of sacred time in religious experience.

Applying the methodology of phenomenology of religion, I inspect the ways in which human beings experience sacred time in Hinduism and present an argument against Mircea Eliade's understanding of the nature of sacred time in Hinduism. Eliade asserted that all sacred time in Hinduism is fundamentally circular in nature and that the experience of sacred time is an experience of the original act of creation being made consciously present to the individual.

I will scrutinize Eliade's arguments on two fronts. Firstly, I argue against Eliade's claim that all sacred time is circular in nature within Hinduism. Instead, I maintain that while some sacred time is indeed circular, linear, or historically grounded sacred time also exists in Hinduism.

To support my arguments, I draw on case examples from both sacred texts and the scholarly interpretations of those texts in Hinduism. After the introductory chapter which details my methodology, I begin in the second chapter by clarifying the difference between sacred and profane time and then outlining Eliade's conception of sacred time and specifying the flaws that I find in his theory. In the third chapter, I explore circular

sacred time in Hinduism, finding in some instances Eliade was correct to argue that sacred time is circular in nature. In the fourth chapter, I offer evidence to support my primary thesis that Hinduism also features numerous instances of linear sacred time, which Eliade had attributed only to religions that are more contemporary. Eliade's claim that only circular sacred time is present in Hinduism creates inconsistencies within his theory of sacred time.

In the fifth chapter, I provide and then rebut possible counter-arguments against my theory of linear sacred time in Hinduism centering on Eliade's conception of avatars and myth. Lastly, I conclude chapter six with a summary of my arguments which revise the phenomenological understanding of sacred time in Hinduism to include both circular sacred time *and* linear sacred time.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Philosophy and religion have deep-rooted ties to one another. In the West, philosophy and theology have, and often still do, go hand in hand. Many of those considered the greatest Western philosophers were also theologians, and even those who were not, still often dealt with various aspects of religion in their works. Although less widely studied, the same link between philosophy and theology is present and fundamental to Indian philosophy. Traditional Indian philosophies and religions are so deeply intertwined that it can be challenging to discern where religion leaves off and philosophy begins. Historically there has certainly been dialogue about comparisons between Indian and Western philosophy, and although the exchange of ideas between these fields continues to expand, there remain many unexplored connections between these two areas of philosophy. In this work I will further develop one of those connections – the concept of time. I will address the concepts of linear sacred time and circular sacred time. I focus in particular on Mircea Eliade's conception of circular sacred time and argue for revision to his claim that all sacred time in Hinduism is circular sacred time.

I will explore the role of sacred time in religious experience. To do this, I will be adopting phenomenological methods as applied to religious experience; I will examine the ways in which human beings experience sacred time. I will primarily be focusing on Hinduism, but some discussion of Christianity and Judaism will also be included since Eliade used these two religions as a foil to Hinduism to support his claim that sacred time in Hinduism is only circular in nature. In the tradition of Eliade, I will discuss the idea that when part of religious experience, time has special features that make it distinct from a secular experience of subjective time. However, unlike Eliade, I will claim that both linear and circular sacred time exist in Hinduism and that both can be consciously experienced by an individual through a variety of methods. I will argue that Eliade was mistaken to attribute only circular sacred time to Hinduism.

In the mid-twentieth century, the philosopher and scholar of religion Eliade extensively explored the distinction between the sacred and the profane in religious experience, focusing primarily on the role of myth and participation in religious festivals. In his work, Eliade initially concentrated on the idea that “archaic”¹ religions such as Hinduism utilize a different type of sacred time from more “modern”² religions such as Judaism and Christianity. Eliade made the claim that all sacred time is circular time in

¹ Eliade used the terms “archaic” and “traditional” to denote religions in which he felt that sacred time is circular in nature as opposed to more contemporary religions such as Christianity and Judaism, which he felt, presents a linear historical temporal focus. I feel that the use of “archaic” would generally be inappropriate to use when referring to religions, but will make use of this phrasing when discussing Eliade’s view in order to prevent overcomplicating matters.

² “Modern” or “contemporary” will sometimes be used in reference to Christianity and Judaism in this dissertation. In using these terms, I do not intend any commentary on the historical place of these religions, but simply use “modern” and “contemporary” as Eliade did to contrast Christianity and Judaism against Hinduism.

these archaic religions, meaning that all sacred time involves a return to what Eliade terms “the time of origins,” or moment of creation. The same claim that all sacred time in Hinduism is circular has been taken up by others, notably J.N. Mohanty, a phenomenologist. Mohanty commented that sacred time in Hinduism is fundamentally circular in nature (and specifically referenced Eliade) but then failed to explore or justify the validity of this claim³ perhaps believing that the circular nature of sacred time is so self-evident that it does not need further explanation or simply because he chose not to address this particular topic.

Eliade claimed that in modern religions the focus of sacred time has shifted to a linear historical track due to the emphasis on events that take place in recorded history. Eliade made a clear distinction between religions that feature circular sacred time and those that possess linear historical sacred time. As I shall show in the course of this dissertation, his categories of circular and linear are too tidy. He placed religions squarely into *either* circular *or* linear and failed to recognize that a religion, such as Hinduism, can easily encompass both linear historical and circular sacred time. For example, he placed Hinduism in the category of having circular sacred time in contrast to Christianity and Judaism, which he placed in the category of linear historical sacred time. I believe that Eliade was, at best, partially correct. I believe that Eliade was correct that circular sacred time is present in Hinduism. However, I will argue that he was fundamentally incorrect to say that an individual practicing Hinduism can only

³ Mohanty, Jitendra Nath. *Reason and Tradition in Indian Thought: An Essay on the Nature of Indian Philosophical Thinking*. Clarendon Press, 1993. 187.

consciously access circular sacred time. I will offer evidence that an individual in Hinduism can experience both linear and circular sacred time and I will support my position utilizing primary examples from sacred texts in Hinduism.

Eliade himself did not use the phrase “linear historical sacred time” when discussing sacred time in religions such as Christianity. He instead emphasized that such “modern” religions connect to the sacred through events that took place in history, not in the time of origins which he associated with circular sacred time. I have chosen to make use of the phrase “linear historical sacred time” in order to emphasize the phenomenological qualities that differentiate how a religious person experiences this type of sacred time from circular sacred time.

To sum things up my primary objective is to disprove the claim made by Eliade that religious person in Hinduism can only experience circular sacred time. I argue that both circular sacred time and linear sacred time are evident in Hinduism and can be accessed through religious experience. I strongly contend that the kind of linear sacred time that Eliade attributed only to contemporary religions, such as Christianity, is very much present in Hinduism. I will argue for an alternate position - namely that sacred time can be both linear and circular in Hinduism and that both are equally valid modes through which an individual can experience sacred time. I will support this claim with case examples from the history and practices of select schools of thought in Hinduism. Additionally, I will address possible objections to my arguments about linear sacred time in Hinduism. There are several possible avenues through which Eliade, or a scholar of his works, might attempt to rebut my theory but I will offer counter arguments to

reinforce my central thesis that both linear sacred time and circular sacred time are present in Hinduism.

1.2 An Overview the Project

Following this introduction, in chapter two, I will establish definitions of sacred and profane time and provide some examples of the different forms the experience of sacred time can take. Then I will offer a historical background relating to sacred time as a topic in the phenomenology of religion, and I will provide a basic review of Eliade's description of sacred time as circular in archaic religions. Finally, I will lay the groundwork for the subsequent chapters of this dissertation. In later chapters, I will utilize case examples from Christianity, Judaism, and Hinduism to correct Eliade's position and establish my own thesis that within Hinduism a religious individual could experience both linear and circular sacred time, dependent upon the context of their experience. Linear sacred time and circular sacred time are not mutually exclusive as Eliade incorrectly suggested.

Before beginning a discussion of the distinctions between kinds of sacred time, I feel that I should first provide a brief description of the methodology of phenomenology of religion which underlines my methodology in this thesis.

1.3 Methodology

As a discipline within philosophy, the field of phenomenology is relatively young and was established in the early part of the twentieth century. In the simplest terms, phenomenology can be described as a methodology relating to the study of phenomena, but it is of course something much more significant than that. Martin Heidegger, in *Being and Time*, commented that “the expression “phenomenology” signifies primarily a *methodological conception*”⁴ and that “the expression “phenomenology” means to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself.”⁵ As a methodology, phenomenology is the study of the phenomena in the world as they appear in the world and of human experience as directed toward phenomena. It seeks to create an account of the nature of human experience in the world.

Phenomenology seeks to not simply say that a person is consciously aware of a phenomenon in the world but instead goes much deeper to reflect an intentionality in the human experience. Instead of merely saying “I experience a thunderstorm,” phenomenology requires that we stand outside of our self and actively engage in reflection upon the “experience of a thunderstorm” and how the thunderstorm appears to the consciousness of the individual engaged in the experience.

As with any method in philosophy, there are many interpretations and specializations related to the application of this methodology. This dissertation will

⁴ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. translated by Edward Robinson John Macquarrie, Harper, 1962.50.

⁵ *Ibid.* 50.

specifically adopt the methodology of phenomenology of religion⁶ which seeks use the critical structure provided by phenomenology to examine various aspects of religious experience. To quote Douglas Allen, through the methodology of phenomenology the phenomenologist “become[s] directly aware of phenomena that appear in immediate experience, and thereby to allow the phenomenologist to describe the essential structures of these phenomena.”⁷ In this thesis, I seek to provide such a description of a specific type of religious experience: the experience of sacred as opposed to profane time. Methodologically phenomenology of religion:

attempts to describe religious experiences with their religious phenomena as accurately as possible. In its descriptions, analysis, and interpretation of meaning it attempts to suspend value judgments about what is real or unreal in experiences of others. It attempts to describe, understand, and do justice to the religious phenomena as they appear in religious experiences of others.⁸

Of the myriad of topics addressed by philosophy, I think that philosophy of religion can, in many ways, be one of the most controversial since many philosophers working in this area have a personal vested interest in either proving or disproving the existence of religious experience. I feel that a risk inherent in the study of philosophy of religion is a lack of objectivity. By applying the methodology of phenomenology of religion, I seek to

⁶ Note that there is significant controversy about whether the combination of phenomenology with theology is a legitimate practice. For the sake of this work, I will utilize a phenomenological method, as that is the framework through which Eliade analyzed religion.

⁷ Allen, Douglas. "Phenomenology of Religion." *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, edited by Lindsay Jones, vol. 11, Macmillan, 1987. 188.

⁸ *Ibid.* 187.

maintain objectivity about the issue of sacred time and its implications for philosophy. I do not strive to prove or disprove, advocate or disavow, or to place value judgments on any particular religion or its practices. To utilize the methodology of phenomenology of religion means examining the first person experience of religious phenomena for the individual person. Therefore, in this dissertation, I will make no claims about the validity of philosophic theories within Hinduism or to make any claims about the legitimacy of one school of Hinduism over another. Instead, I seek to explore the nature of sacred time and its relationship to human experience as represented by case examples taken from Hinduism. I will show that phenomenologically, for a religious individual practicing Hinduism, it is possible to experience both linear and circular sacred time which is in opposition to Eliade's more limited view that only circular sacred time can be experienced in Hinduism.

Additionally, I feel it is fitting to adopt this a phenomenological methodology when exploring Eliade's arguments on the sacred and profane in time because Eliade himself looked favorably on and often adopted a phenomenological approach in his studies. Eliade wrote that:

a religious phenomenon will only be recognized as such if it is grasped at its level, that is to say, if it is studied *as* something religious. To try to grasp the essence of such a phenomenon by means of physiology, psychology, sociology, economics, linguistics, art or any other study is

false; it misses the one unique and irreducible element in it—the element of the sacred.⁹

Eliade felt that, while certainly worthwhile in themselves, other disciplines such as those mentioned above would “[miss] the one unique and irreducible element in it—the element of the sacred.”¹⁰ To phenomenologically study the sacred one must examine the interaction of the sacred with human consciousness. In keeping with this tradition, I will adopt such phenomenological methods to show that sacred time in Hinduism can be experienced as both linear sacred time and circular sacred time depending on the framework of the experience.

Phenomenologically sacred time is consciousness of an experience of the sacred. Consider the following two examples; the first is a simple phenomenological analysis of an object and the second a phenomenological analysis of the experience of the sacred. For the first example, consider a person who is holding a hammer and using it to pound nails into a board. Here, this person might phenomenologically examine the experience that they have a physical hammer that they hold in their hand and are using to pound nails into a board. What is being studied is not the physical movement taking place, but the experience of those movements as they occur in the person’s consciousness. In the second example, consider an individual who is participating in a ritual in which they build an altar as part of a sacred rite. Here, the analysis is not of the act of building the altar itself but of the conscious experience of the sacred that is invoked through the

⁹ Eliade, Mircea. *Patterns in Comparative Religion*. translated by Rosemary Sheed, Reprint edition, University of Nebraska Press, 1996. xi.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* xi.

process of building an altar. The phenomenological study is not applied to the actions taking place but the mental state invoked by the act as it connects to the sacred. Eliade made use of phenomenology to examine the experience of sacred time. He examined the experience of the sacred that a person enters into through participating in religious practices.

There is some debate about whether or not Eliade's approach to examining religion and religious experience is phenomenological or theological. As Studstill pointed out "Eliade identifies himself as a 'historian of religions,' a designation that turns out to be misleading."¹¹ Studstill also highlighted Eliade's focus on "religious phenomenon as '*hierophany*'"¹² which "has two elements: the 'modality of the sacred' and the expression of that modality as a concrete historical phenomena."¹³ Here the modality of the sacred is the experience which is analyzed. Eliade utilized historical examples as case studies that can be phenomenologically studied to explore religious experience itself. The historical and primary text examples provide an access point to examine the way an individual phenomenologically experiences the sacred. In keeping with Eliade, I will also utilize this "*hierophany*" approach to explore the experience of sacred time in Hinduism.

¹¹ Studstill, Randal. "Eliade, Phenomenology, and the Sacred." *Religious Studies*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2000, pp. 177-194. 178.

¹² Ibid. 178.

¹³ Ibid. 178.

CHAPTER 2. AN OVERVIEW OF SACRED AND PROFANE TIME

2.1 Introduction

Time and questions relating to time are by no means new areas of philosophic study. Both historically and in the present-day, philosophers have tackled issues relating to time in ways that I might broadly categorize into two groups. The first group consists of philosophers who seek to discover the nature of time itself while the second group seeks to address questions about how the human consciousness experiences and perceives time. Of course, these two lines of questioning are by no means mutually exclusive or an exhaustive summary of different ways in which time is studied. Philosophers who explore the nature of time itself raise questions such as whether or not time exists, whether time is tensed or tenseless, and whether time flows in a particular direction. More recently, many philosophers have chosen to utilize a combination of philosophy and physics when seeking answers to such questions, leading to discussions about A-theory and B-theory of time as well as endurantism and perdurantism. Beyond questions about the nature of time itself are issues related

to how human beings experience and perceive time.¹ Here, the focus tends to be on human consciousness, human perception of the passage of time, the duration of events, intentionality, and memory. I have chosen to focus on one small aspect of time that relates most closely to this second group of questions--the nature of time as perceived by human beings during a religious experience. I will not directly address questions about endurantism and perdurantism.

For the purpose of this work, I specifically adopt the terminology utilized by Eliade when discussing time in the context of religious experience. Eliade used two terms, "sacred time" and "profane time" to distinguish between human experience of time in a specific sort of religious context and human experience of time in a secular context. Broadly, sacred time refers to the way a human experiences time while participating in religious experiences that connect the participating individual with the time of origins, or time of creation of the universe. In contrast, profane time is the time of everyday human experience, life, and history. While Eliade focused particularly on

¹ A-theory and B-theory are two responses to the question of whether tensed time exists. A-theory claims that the tenses of past, present and future are relevant and that time exists and progresses in a linear fashion wherein an event can be related to another event using tenses such as past, present, and future. B-theory represents the idea that time is fundamentally unreal and without tense. Tenses serve only as reference points for sequences of human experiences and have no actual status in relation to time itself. Dealing with the presentence of objects in time the key divisions are between endurantism and perdurantism. An endurantist holds that all objects are present at all times in which they exist, i.e. the object exists in an enduring manner through the past, the present and into the future along its worldline. A perdurantist believes that an object has spatio-temporal parts. One part is encountered in the present, others have been there in the past or might exist in the future depending upon how far the object's worldline extends time. An endurantist could be considered a presentist and a perdurantist could be considered to be an eternalist, although this is not necessarily the case with all theorists. For further information see: McTaggart, J. Ellis. "The Unreality of Time." *Mind, New Series*, vol. 17, no. 68, 1908, pp. 457-474., LePoidevin, robin. *Questions of Time and Tense*. Oxford University Press, 2002., Mellor, D.H. *Real Time*. Routledge, 1998., and Hales, Steven D. and Timothy A. Johnson. "Endurantism, Perdurantism and Special Relativity." *The Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 53, no. 213, 2003, pp. 524-539.

the sacred, he did clarify the nature of the profane in order to best contrast it with the sacred. As Long pointed out, “the sacred he [Eliade] argued, is the opposite of the profane, and persons become aware of the sacred because it reveals itself as something wholly different from the profane.”² Thus for Eliade, a religious person utilizes the profane as a medium through which they access the sacred. Thomas Barrie posited that physical architecture in sacred spaces could provide a physical symbol that facilitates a conscious transition from the profane to the sacred,³ and Eliade also emphasized this idea. Religious rituals and festivals facilitate entrance into sacred time according to Eliade. The experience of the sacred, particularly circular sacred time is what Eliade terms the *hierophany*. Eliade described the *hierophany* as “that something sacred shows itself to us.”⁴ While the primary focus of this work is on the phenomenology of how humans experience sacred time in Hinduism, it is first useful to examine what profane time is and how it functions.

2.2 Defining Profane Time

Profane time can refer to any human experience of time that is not within a specific kind of religious context. It is quite simply the time of everyday human existence, our references to history, daily life, and time according to calendars and

² Long, Eugene Thomas. *Twentieth-Century Western Philosophy of Religion, 1900-2000*. edited by A. A. Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000. 169.

³ Barrie, Thomas. *Spiritual Path, Sacred Place: Myth, Ritual, and Meaning in Architecture*. Shambhala Publications, 1996. 44.

⁴ Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1957. 11.

clocks. Profane time is the time that we perceive when we set a timer for bread baking in the oven, or when we set a stopwatch to see how long it takes us to run a mile, the hour of our birth or the time being reported by an atomic clock. Profane time represents the “ordinary temporal duration, in which acts without religious meaning have their settling.”⁵ It is typically viewed to progress in a linear fashion from moment A to B to C, from past to present.⁶ Eliade regarded both profane time and profane space as homogeneous in nature, “no break qualitatively differentiates the various parts of its mass.”⁷ In contrast, sacred time and sacred space are heterogeneous which means that there is temporal and spatial variation. According to Eliade, the person who experiences sacred time or space engages the *hierophany* where they have a more authentic and genuine experience of the world that is closer to the sacred origin of the universe. I will discuss authenticity and the sacred with more depth later chapters. Generally, in Eliade’s view, a religious person in an archaic religion is aware that the daily life that they live in profane time is, at best, a shadow of the creativity and power that existed at the moment of the creation of the universe. In the final chapter of *The Sacred and the Profane*, Eliade wrote, “By reactualizing sacred history, by imitating divine behavior, man puts and keeps himself close to the gods—that is, in the real and the significant.”⁸ This point is repeated in Eliade’s later work *Myth and Reality*, where he stated that “it is

⁵ Ibid. 68.

⁶ There are of course many other theories about the function of time, and not all of them support a linear understanding of what here is being termed profane time. For the sake of this work I shall adopt what is currently the most widely held view, and the one that Eliade utilized, that profane time is linear and follows a progression of past, present, and future.

⁷ Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1957. 22.

⁸ Ibid. 202.

the first manifestation of a thing that is significant and valid, not its successive epiphanies."⁹ He meant here that it is the first creation or instance of something that has value because it is heterogeneous. Each successive iteration of that type of event or thing is homogenous with all other successive iterations and no longer unique. The religious person seeks to experience the heterogeneous time of creation, which is "the real and the significant." Profane time is, at best, a poor shadow or imitation of the sacred and because it is homogenous lacks significance.¹⁰ Eliade valorized the role of myth and repetition of rituals that imitate the time of origins. He viewed archaic societies as having an ontological conception wherein object, actions, and even people only become *real* if they repeat the archetype of the time of origins.¹¹ Eliade wrote that "the man of a traditional culture sees himself as real only to the extent that he ceases to be himself ... and is satisfied with imitating and repeating the gestures of another [from the original time of creation]."¹² Eliade believed that to be entirely authentic; persons enter into an experience of the time of creation wherein they recognize that they are part of that creation. Through this, Eliade noted, time is abolished¹³ (here meaning profane time) and only circular sacred time remains. Eliade did not regard this abolition of profane time as permanent, but noted that human life taking place in profane time is "without meaning"¹⁴ and that individuals in archaic societies crave a return to

⁹ ---. *Myth and Reality*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper & Row, 1963. 34.

¹¹ Eliade, Mircea. *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper & Brothers, 1954. 34.

¹² Ibid. 34.

¹³ Ibid. 35.

¹⁴ Ibid. 36.

participation in sacred time which has meaning. Eliade wrote, “the man of archaic cultures tolerates “history” with difficulty and attempts periodically to abolish it.”¹⁵ The homogeneity of events that take place in history means that they lack meaning and only events that occurred at the time of creation as heterogeneous events have real value.

Within profane time, it is important to distinguish between objective profane time and subjective profane time. The former refers to measured, regulated time as one would objectively measure with a clock while the latter refers to the human perception of the passage of time which can (or as some might argue can only be) subjective. While itself an interesting topic, explanations and debates about the nature of objective profane time are not topics that I will address in depth, as they are tangential to my primary thesis about the phenomenological experience of sacred time. Instead, I focus on the most standard understanding of profane time as a linear historical timeline where events are considered to proceed in a linear fashion.

It is vital to recognize that profane time is not always encountered in a purely objective fashion. Instead, during everyday life, humans often perceive that profane time appears to either slow down or speed up. Eliade noted this, stating that:

Now, what it is possible to observe in respect to a non-religious man is that he too experiences a certain discontinuity and heterogeneity of time. For him too there is the comparatively monotonous time of his work, and the time of celebrations and festivals— in short, “festival time.” He too

¹⁵ Ibid. 36.

lives in varying temporal rhythms and is aware of times of different intensities¹⁶

Eliade recognized that when experiencing profane time there can be experiences wherein a person perceives time to move at different rates when in fact the actual measured rate of time passing remains stable. The “variable temporal rhythms” lead to results where two people may be sharing an experience, and one person perceives the experience as passing quickly, and the other person perceives the experience as passing slowly.

To illustrate this, consider the following scenario. Picture a student, Alice, who is sitting in an introduction to philosophy course with several other students and an instructor. Alice and the other students in the room can look at the clock on the wall, and as long as the clock is functioning properly, they all can see the clock’s hands move at measured, objective intervals of profane time. If the clock is atomically regulated, it would be moving at a measured rate that matched all other such clocks in this particular time zone. Scientifically, the same amount of clock or profane time passes for all of the students in the room. Alice, individually, may feel that time is either dragging or flying by despite knowing objectively that the rate of passage of time remains constant according to the clock. Depending on her attitudes and perceptions, the hands of the clock might appear to move with horrifying slowness or disappointing rapidity. If Alice is simply waiting for the end of the class, yearning for it to be over so that she can move

¹⁶ ---. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1957. 70-71.

on to some more desirable occupation, then time may feel as if it moves at a snail's pace, a minute lasting for eternity. Alternatively, Charles, who is seated next to Alice, is thrilled to be there and deeply engaged in the course, excited about the topic and wishing that the discussion at hand might never end. Charles might feel as if time is moving extremely rapidly. As an engaged student, Charles perceives time to move much more quickly than the actual time reflected on the clock. Regardless of the student's mental attitude toward the class and their personal perceptions of time as either speeding up or slowing down, time according to the clock is scientifically the same for both the interested and the disinterested student. Each person perceives a different experience of the rate at which time is passing. This example is representative of Eliade's "varying temporal rhythms" in which the mental perception of the passage of time varies widely. Profane time itself maintains a single, measurable, objective pace while an individual's mental attitude subjectively alters conscious perception of that speed.

Experiences with profane time, such as the one above, occur day in and day out. As we move through our everyday life, we do so primarily in profane time. As the previous example shows, it would be inaccurate to define profane time as either completely subjective or completely objective. An individual will often experience both kinds of time simultaneously. The passage of profane time to a person's consciousness can be subjective and at the same time objectively, according to science, its rate of passage remains constant.

It is helpful first to discuss the concept of profane time, both subjective and objective because it can provide an access point through which a person may enter sacred time. An individual's participation in the profane time it takes to perform a ritual or participate in a festival takes place on one level while consciously the individual may be participating in the experience of sacred time. In a sense the body continues to experience the linear passage of profane time while simultaneously a person's consciousness is participating in sacred time. The consciousness experience of sacred time will be the primary focus of this rest of this work.

2.3 Defining Sacred Time

In contrast to profane time, an individual accesses the experience of sacred time through religious experience. Sacred time represents periods during which an individual steps out of everyday life with its profane time and into a conscious experience of the sacred. In distinguishing the sacred from the profane, whether in terms of a physical object or temporally, Eliade believed that the sacred is manifest to human beings through *hierophany*. As mentioned earlier, this *hierophany* is a duality. It is the modality of the sacred and the modality of historical phenomena. The sacred is revealed only when the profane is set aside, and the profane, historical phenomena that are being experienced, provides the access point or pathway through which the sacred is accessed. Studstill noted that "The *hierophany* is both a representation of the modes of the sacred and an expression of 'religious significance in the mind of' the believer. In

other words, Eliade equated modality of the sacred' with the believer's experience."¹⁷ Thus, the religious individual on one level is still present in the everyday profane time but consciousness is transported into an experience of sacred time. Here I believe it is also important to note, as Reno did, that "The sacred never fully reveals itself, nor is the profane ever completely transformed into the sacred. The profane never *becomes* the sacred."¹⁸ The profane object or experience functions as a gateway to the experience of the sacred, but itself remains profane. A tree as a gateway to the *hierophany* still does remain as a tree in the profane world. Eliade also described the experience of a hierophany as a *coincidentia oppositorum*, a unity of opposites. The profane is needed in order for someone to experience the sacred and the experience of both profane and sacred are overlaid for the individual having the experience.

Eliade also utilized the term *homo religiosus* to characterize a person whose perspective on reality is located in sacred religious experience or time. Eliade emphasized that *homo religiosus* is more closely associated with individuals in archaic religions such as Hinduism, whom he felt have a more authentic experience of the sacred because they can access circular sacred time, unlike those in more modern religions such as Christianity which are grounded in linear time. Eliade also argued that the person of archaic societies actively seeks to engage with the sacred, both temporally

¹⁷ Studstill, Randal. "Eliade, Phenomenology, and the Sacred." *Religious Studies*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2000, pp. 177-194. 182.

¹⁸ Reno, Stephen J. "Progressional View of Hierophanies." *Ibid.* vol. 8, 1972, pp. 153-160. 155.

and in relation to sacred physical objects.¹⁹ He also noted that “Primitive man undertakes to attain a *religious ideal of humanity ...*”²⁰ which is attained through engaging in the experience of the moment of creation through participation in circular sacred time.

The distinction between sacred and profane is not one that applies merely to time, but can also reference objects and space. As Dadosky stated:

when a profane object is transformed into a *hierophany* the object retains its profane mode of being. For example, a rock that becomes a *hierophany* does not lose its “rockness”; it remains a rock in the ordinary sense of the world ...” but is viewed as an access point to the sacred.

Consciousness is no longer stuck, in a sense, in the everyday but is freed to experience a different kind of reality which is the sacred.²¹

For Eliade, the *hierophany* is the key that unlocks the experience of the sacred, including circular sacred time. The profane is still present, but the phenomenological experience of the individual is transformed into that of the sacred. For example, in later chapters I will discuss a ritual surrounding a fire altar utilizing the duality of the *hierophany*. The

¹⁹ Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1957. 12-13.

²⁰ Ibid. 187-188.

²¹ Eliade argued that the reality of the sacred is more valuable and a more desirable experience than that of the profane. Some scholars have criticized this point and believe Eliade unfairly romanticized archaic religions over more contemporary ones, when in fact he could only speculate upon what a person in an actual archaic religion might have experienced. While this is an interesting controversy in Eliade scholarship, I will not be directly addressing it directly as I feel that it is tangential to the focus of this project.

fire altar remains as a profane physical altar and fire while at the same time unlocks access to the experience of the sacred for the individual building and using the altar.

Here I would like to make clear Eliade did not claim that all subjective experiences of time are religious in nature which can be illustrated by numerous examples from everyday life. Eliade's *homo religiosus* individuals are not locked into experiencing every moment of their lives in consciousness awareness of sacred time. The *homo religiosus* individual is someone who may live portions of his life in purely profane time but is, on other occasions, capable of stepping into the modality of sacred time. The religious person might very well experience the same kinds of variation in temporal intensity that humans experience in everyday lives. For instance, recall the example of Alice and Charles sitting their Introduction to Philosophy class. Alice could be a religious person and could feel as if the clock is dragging while she is sitting in class. That Alice is religious does not necessitate that she continually experiences sacred time, or even that she experiences it in every instance in which her perception of time is disharmonious with linear profane clock time. The difference is that for Alice, her experience of time involves a subjectively perceived slowing of or speeding up of profane time. Her mind is essentially tricking her into feeling as if profane time is moving at different rates while yet it remains constant in its rate of movement from the past to the present. Her religious beliefs have no bearing on this particular experience.

According to Eliade, when experiencing sacred time, a person experiences "the manifestation of something of a wholly different order, a reality that does not belong to

our world"22 The experience of sacred time is altogether a different kind of experience from that of subjective profane time. The religious person who experiences sacred time steps away from profane, or clock time entirely and profane time loses meaning entirely. In sacred time, the clock becomes irrelevant. A person's physical body might still be experiencing profane clock time regarding cell degeneration and his or her place in history, but consciously has moved into a different kind of reality altogether. Heschel described this succulently when he wrote that "In the realm of the spirit there is no difference between a second and a century, between an hour and an age."²³ The experience of time encountered by *homo religiosus* is in a way an experience of timelessness. In the case of circular sacred time, this experience of timelessness will be that of the time of origins taking place at the creation of the universe. However, for the individual who experiences linear historical sacred time, the experience is that of a point in linear history that is phenomenologically revisited through the religious experience.

As Eliade showed, a religious person experiences something unique in sacred time than the different intensities experienced by our students. The religious person: experiences intervals to time that are "sacred," that have no part in the temporal duration that precedes and follows them, that have a wholly different structure and origin, for they are of a primordial time, sanctified by the gods and capable of being made present by the festival. This

²² Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1957. 11.

²³ Heschel, Abraham Joshua. *The Sabbath*. Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1951. 98.

transhuman quality of liturgical time is inaccessible to a nonreligious man.²⁴

The religious person might very well experience the same kinds of variation in the intensity of time that our students experience. The religious person very well could be one of those two students and feel as if the clock is dragging, yet this is not sacred time. The difference is that for the students, their time is an apparent or perceived slowing of speeding up of profane time. Their mind is essentially tricking them into feeling as if profane time is moving at different rates while time actually remains constant in its intensity. A person who experiences sacred time, while still physically part of the profane world, experiences the events taking place in the profane world at a new level – that of the sacred.

Allen pointed out that Eliade emphasized a concept of transcendence, using the word to describe the idea of “a universal structure of religion”²⁵ that is quite broad in concept. Allen described this transcendence as a concept that could be applied to secular events – so the uniqueness of Eliade’s religious transcendence must be differentiated from any secular sorts of transcendence.²⁶ For Eliade, the religious experience involves the revealing of something that has previously been concealed. In the move from the profane to the sacred conception of time – a new perception of temporality is revealed. This bears some similarity to Heidegger’s discussion about

²⁴ Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1957. 71.

²⁵ Allen, Douglas. "Mircea Eliade's Phenomenological Analysis of Religious Experience." *The Journal of Religion*, vol. 52, no. 2, 1972, pp. 170-186. 174.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 174.

authenticity, concealing, and revealing in *Being and Time*.²⁷ Revealing serves to bring forth the essence of something, and human agents are involved in causality wherein possibilities in the universe are brought forth from the realm of possibility into the realm of reality. Humans are special in that they have the ability to act as causal agents in this bringing-forth. Eliade utilized a similar concept in a religious context wherein *homo religiosus* is able, through the *hierophany*, to reveal, to themselves, an experience of the sacred.

The linearity of everyday life and experience in time is covered over and a different experience of sacred time is revealed. Eliade used the term *hierophany* to describe the breakthrough of an individual into the experience of the sacred. “The sacred always manifests itself as a reality of a wholly different order from “natural” realities.”²⁸ Yet, the everyday is very much a part of the sacred – the sacred uses the everyday to reveal itself.

In *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*, Eliade described three categories of “facts” which are mechanisms through which individuals in archaic society connect to an ontology of the time of origins. These mechanisms are all repetitions of “primordial acts” and serve to connect individuals to the sacred time of origins.²⁹ While the third category is most relevant to this project, it is still useful to outline the first two

²⁷ An interesting tangent would be to examine the similarities and differences between Eliade’s conception of authenticity as accessed through the experience of sacred time and Heidegger’s understanding of authenticity. At present though, such a discussion is beyond the scope of this project.

²⁸ Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1957. 10.

²⁹ ---. *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper & Brothers, 1954. 5.

categories. The first category consists of facts that reveal that “reality is a function of the imitation of a celestial archetype.”³⁰ This first category might include things such as a human city that is related to a prototype of a sacred city from the sacred time of origins in that religion. Eliade described Indian royal cities as an instance of this celestial archetype fact, for example, the human city of Singiriya as modeled on a celestial city Alakamanda.³¹ Other natural features regarded as sacred also fit into this category such as mountains or oceans.³² The second category of facts reveals that “reality is conferred through participation in the “symbolism of the Center”...”³³ and would include physical structures such as a temple that become a sacred representation of the center of the world at the time of origins, or a mountain that is sacred. Note that Eliade included natural features such as mountains in both category one (archetypes) and category two (symbolism of the center). What differentiates these two categories is that a mountain regarded as an archetype serves as a sacred representation of natural or uncultivated features that existed in the world of the gods, whereas a mountain regarded as a symbolism of the center has a narrower focus as representative of the actual center of the universe.

Finally, the third category which Eliade named, “repetition of the cosmogony,” is most relevant to evaluating sacred time in religions such as Hinduism. This third category of facts consists of rituals, rites, and other acts which “deliberately repeat such

³⁰ Ibid. 5.

³¹ Ibid. 9.

³² Ibid. 9.

³³ Ibid. 5.

and such acts posited *ab origine* by gods, heroes, or ancestors.”³⁴ Eliade explained that such acts, which take place in profane time, gain meaning and allow for a connection to sacred time because of the intentionality of the participant. This third category is the most relevant to understanding Eliade’s conception of sacred time, as shall be discussed in section 2.4 of this thesis. In brief, the repetition of the cosmogony involves two key aspects. Firstly, Eliade stated, “every creation repeats the pre-eminent cosmogonic act, the Creation of the world.”³⁵ Secondly, “whatever is founded has its foundation at the center of the world”³⁶ Every time a religious individual engages in some form of creation as part of a sacred ritual, they are in effect connecting to the paradigm of the creation of the world and therefore, whatever was created by the religious individual as part of that ritual becomes symbolically sacred of the center of the world, of creation itself. Eliade regarded creation as emanating from a central point.³⁷ For example, the act of building an altar is a sacred act that repeats building of the first altar during the sacred time of creation and then that altar itself becomes symbolic of the center of the universe at the time of creation. It is through these acts that connect the religious individual to the time of creation that an individual can enter into circular sacred time. Here it is important to note that Eliade’s three categories all focus on circular sacred time, and all focus on the time of creation.

³⁴ Ibid. 5-6.

³⁵ Ibid. 18.

³⁶ Ibid. 18.

³⁷ Ibid. 19.

2.4 Eliade's General Conception of Circular Sacred Time

According to Eliade, sacred time has an ontological status of always being identical with itself. He wrote that "*by its very nature sacred time is reversible in the sense that, properly speaking, it is a primordial mythical time made present.*"³⁸ For Eliade, religious persons who are experiencing the sacred in any form "must be prepared by their experience, including their traditional religious background, before they can apprehend it. To others, the sacred tree, for example, remains merely a tree."³⁹ Here the religious person can participate in a *hierophany*; he experiences both the profane tree and the tree as an element of the sacred. "Every religious festival, any liturgical time, represents the reactualization of a sacred event that took place in a mythical past, "in the beginning."⁴⁰ So for a sacred experience to qualify as an experience of circular time, the experience must *not* relate directly to a moment of linear profane historical time but instead relate to a mythical time. This concept is of vital importance since it sets a firm line in the sand between circular sacred time and what I have termed linear sacred time. Linear sacred time returns the religious individual to the experience of a definitive moment in profane history, not to a mythical time.

³⁸ ---. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1957. 68.

³⁹ Rennie, Bryan. "Mircea Eliade's Understanding of Religion and Eastern Christian Thought." *Russian History*, vol. 40, 2013, pp. 264-280. 261.

⁴⁰ Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1957. 69.

An example can help clarify this point. Consider Cleo, who is sitting under a tree. Her physical experience of sitting under a tree is occurring in profane time. Cleo, as *homo religiosus* is then able to use that profane experience as a key to unlock “primordial mythical time” in which her mind can enter a mode of sacred time related to that tree. The tree manifests a *hierophany*. The *hierophany* is established when people utilize religious ritual or engage with an object as the prompt for their consciousness to break through into an experience of the sacred. Eliade also noted that physical objects such as a tree or spaces such as a temple can help to establish the *hierophany*. Such objects exist on one level as simply a profane tree or a physical building, but they also facilitate the phenomenological experience of the sacred for a person who views them in a religious context.⁴¹ This is the *coincidentia oppositorum* in practice. “By manifesting the sacred, any object becomes *something else*, yet it continues to remain *itself*.”⁴² So in the example above, while Cleo on one level is aware that the tree she sits under is homogenous with other physical trees, on a different level she acknowledges the tree as a manifestation of the sacred representing the heterogeneous tree that was first created at the origin of the universe. In doing so, she can enter into a mental experience of the mythical time of origins. Rituals also serve this same function, and by participating in a ritual that connects to the time of origins, the individual experiences a shift in consciousness from profane time to circular sacred time. “Through repetition of the cosmogonic act, concrete time, in which the

⁴¹ Ibid. 11-12.

⁴² Ibid. 12.

construction takes place, is projected into mythical time, *in illo tempore* when the foundation of the world occurred.”⁴³ Here Cleo is experiencing circular sacred time because her experience of the sacred relates directly to the mythical time or origins and not to any particular event in linear historical time. Had her experience of the sacred been connected to a moment in linear historical time then she would have experienced what I term linear sacred time, and which Eliade attributed to a less authentic experience of the sacred found in “modern” religions such as Christianity.

Eliade claimed that *homo religiosus* inhabits two distinct types of time and that of the two, sacred and profane, sacred is much more valuable. “Sacred time, appears under the paradoxical aspect of a circular time, reversible and recoverable, a sort of eternal mythical present that is periodically reintegrated by means of rites.”⁴⁴ Note here that Eliade deliberately linked sacred time with circular time connected the mythical time of origins. He also claimed that the *homo religiosus* “attempts to regain a sacred time that, from one point of view, can be homologized to eternity.”⁴⁵ While experiencing sacred time, a person who is performing a ritual that recreates an event or ritual from the time of origins is having an experience of participating in the original event that is commemorated through the ritual that is taking place in profane time. An individual is literally participating in the same temporal reality in which the original event occurred, or in other words, the past is made present to the individual who is

⁴³ ---. *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper & Brothers, 1954. 20.

⁴⁴ ---. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1957. 70.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 70.

participating in the ritual. For example, a person who is participating in a ritualized reenactment of a creation story is no longer participating in profane time as he physically performs his part in the ritual, but his consciousness actually inhabits the time of the event itself, and he participates in the sacred time in which the original event took place. Eliade believed that individuals in archaic religions seek to set themselves “in opposition, by every means in his power, to history, regarded as a succession of events that are irreversible, unforeseeable, possessed of autonomous value.”⁴⁶ This is because they recognize that the time of creation established through sacred time is more real than the profane linear time of everyday life.

For Eliade, it is only through specific kinds of religious participation that a person can enter into the experience of circular sacred time. A person must be participating in a festival or ritual that recalls the time of origins, or in other words the beginning of the present universe. Eliade also regarded some other events as also enabling the experience of circular time, but only if the individuals participating in the event acknowledges the manifestation of the sacred through which the event mimics some aspect of the creation of the universe. Referencing Arnold Van Gennep’s *Les Rites de Passage*,⁴⁷ Eliade commented that “It was long ago observed that “rites of passage” play a considerable part in the life of religious man.”⁴⁸ Eliade also described milestones such

⁴⁶ ---. *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper & Brothers, 1954. 89.

⁴⁷ Van Gennep, Arnold. *Les Rites De Passage*. 1909.

⁴⁸ Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1957. 184.

as birth, moving from one age group to another, marriage and death⁴⁹ as possibly enabling the experience in circular sacred time. Such acts are in effect acts of creation in one way or another and therefore can fit into his third category of facts, repetition of the cosmology, as he discussed in *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*. For instance, the birth of a child echoes the birth of the first child at the mythical time of creation, or the first marriage and so forth.

In establishing what constitutes sacred time, Eliade focused on the role of myth which he defined in the following manner:

Religious participation in a festival implies emerging from ordinary temporal duration and reintegration of the mythical time ritualized by the festival itself. Hence sacred time is indefinitely recoverable, indefinitely repeatable. From one point of view, it could be said that it does not “pass,” that it does not constitute an irreversible duration. It is an ontological, Parmenidean time; it always remains equal to itself, it neither changes nor is exhausted.⁵⁰

Eliade held that circular sacred time is manifested through an individual’s participation in festivals and rituals that enable repetition of the cosmogony. When *homo religiosus* from an archaic religion participates in a daily, monthly, annual or another repeated festival, he is not experiencing a new event with each instance of the festival. Instead,

⁴⁹ ---. *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper & Brothers, 1954. 82.

⁵⁰ ---. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1957. 69.

participation in the festival allows him to experience a *hierophany* where he can enter into sacred time. During this sacred time, he experiences:

the same [time] that had been manifested in the festival of the previous year or in the festival of a century earlier; it is the same time that was created and sanctified by the gods at the period of their *gesta*, of which the festival is precisely a reactualization ... For the sacred time in which the festival runs its course did not exist before the divine *gesta* that the festival commemorates. By creating the various realities that today constitute the world, the *gods also founded sacred time*, for the time contemporary with a creation was necessarily sanctified by the presence and activity of the gods.⁵¹

In other words, the individual participates in a temporal reality that is identical to the temporal reality in which the original event occurred during the mythical time of origins. The festival taking place is not celebrating something new, or even an event from profane linear history. The religious person may be physically present in the profane time of this instance of the festival, but at the same time is undergoing the conscious experience of participating in the unique temporal reality of circular sacred time. The individual is experiencing original iteration of the festival when it occurred as part of the “activity of the Gods” in the “*gesta*” which is the origin of the universe. According to Eliade, this is the essence of circular sacred time. The religious person participating in

⁵¹ Ibid. 69-70.

the festival has mentally circled back to experience the sacred origin of the universe through this festival.

Eliade regarded the experience of circular sacred time as extremely valuable because it allows the participating individual to directly experience the time of origins. He regarded the time of origins, which he sometimes referred to as mythical time, as more “real” than other types of time. The time of origins is the time of creative powers and serves as the template for all of the following human behaviors, rituals and daily life. The time of origins begins with the first instance of the creation of the universe by divine being(s). By participating in a ritual that reenacts this sacred event, a religious person enters into an experience of the identical time in which the original event took place. The consciousness experienced by a person participating in sacred time differentiates “man’s behavior *during* the festival from his behavior *before* or *after* it.”⁵² For when participating in a sacred time “religious man believes that he then lives in *another* time, that he has succeeded in return to the mythical *illud tempus*.”⁵³ Participation in festivals and rituals that access this time of origins allow the religious person to become a “contemporary of the gods in the measure in which he realizes the primordial time in which the divine works were accomplished.”⁵⁴ Eliade believed that over the course of human history, the religious person may lose track the reality of his religious origins from the time of creation, and awareness the original creation event degrades as profane time progresses further from the original event. This degradation

⁵² Ibid. 85.

⁵³ Ibid. 85.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 87.

of clarity about the time of original creation is repaired when *homo religiosus* partakes of ritual practices or festivals and they regain a more real or personal awareness of this reality. By having a direct conscious experience of the time of origins through participation in circular sacred time, Eliade believed that a religious individual can recover knowledge of the reality of the sacred. Therefore, the person who experiences sacred time is a more authentic or “real” person than someone who cannot or chooses not to engage in the experience of the sacred

To summarize, Eliade believed that participation in rituals and festivals enables *homo religiosus* to experience the time of origins. This serves two purposes. “(1) By imitating the gods, man remains in the sacred, hence in reality; (2) by the continuous reactualization of the paradigmatic divine gestures, the world is sanctified. Men’s religious behavior contributes to maintaining the sanctity of the world.”⁵⁵ In brief, religious experience involves a phenomenological movement from the secular into something *other*, something that steps outside of the normal historical sense of life we have in regular moments, and steps into a different kind of experience altogether—the experience of the sacred. The experience of the sacred is valuable as it enables *homo religiosus* to be more authentic and hence their more “real” self as they gain knowledge and personal conscious experience of the sacred.

Beyond Eliade, others have taken up the claim that all sacred time is circular time, notably the phenomenologist J.N. Mohanty. In his chapter “Time, History, Man and Nature” in *Reason and Tradition in Indian Thought*, Mohanty, while dissuading readers

⁵⁵ Ibid. 99.

of the notion that profane time in Hinduism is cyclical, stated “It is well known in modern phenomenology of religion that sacred time is cyclic—no matter in what religion.”⁵⁶ To emphasize his point, Mohanty then quoted Eliade’s claim about the fundamentally cyclical nature of sacred time. Mohanty then commented that:

Not only does the religious point of view look upon, or rather experience, sacred time as “perpetually returning,” but it regards the mythical time as providing the foundation for the profane time of nature and history. From this perspective, the profane time, despite its linear character, experiences the eruption of the cyclic, ever-returning sacred time. ... But this is a feature of all religious experience, and not of the Hindu or the Buddhist alone.⁵⁷

I will not argue against Mohanty's statement at the end of this passage relating to the idea that cyclical sacred time can be a feature of any religious experience and is not limited to a particular religion. As Eliade, himself noted, the claim that all sacred time is circular leads to significant problems when considering religions such as Christianity and Judaism.⁵⁸ Christianity, in particular, serves as an example of a “modern” religion that does not fit into Eliade’s understanding of the sacred as a circular return to the time of origins. Christianity deviates significantly from Eliade’s favored model of the archaic

⁵⁶ Mohanty, Jitendra Nath. *Reason and Tradition in Indian Thought: An Essay on the Nature of Indian Philosophical Thinking*. Clarendon Press, 1993. 187.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 187.

⁵⁸ Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1957. 72.

religion and Eliade claimed that Christianity does not feature circular sacred time.⁵⁹ Instead, Eliade believed that such “modern” religions are firmly grounded in a linear, historical time. Because of this, he believed that *homo religiosus* in such a religion accesses an entirely different sort of sacred time which is grounded in profane historical time, not in the mythical time of origins. As I noted earlier, Eliade himself did not use the phrase “linear sacred time.” I will make use of this phrase to indicate the experience of sacred time that Eliade attributed to “modern” religions. I believe this phrase adeptly summarizes Eliade’s description that linear and historically focused sacred time no longer returns the religious individual to the *illud tempus* of creation but instead involves the recovery of the time in which a particular *historical* event in the religion occurred. For example, a ritual that participates the death of Christ in Christianity allows for a *theophany* instead of a *hierophany*. The *theophany* occurs when the individual experiences the linear sacred time related to that original historical event. In the third chapter, I will specifically address the details of Eliade’s claims about linear sacred time in religions such as Christianity and Judaism. I will utilize select case examples to explain why Eliade regarded linear sacred time as less valuable and authentic than circular sacred time and then show that such linear sacred time is very much accessible to a religious individual in Hinduism, a religion which Eliade characterized as featuring only circular sacred time.

⁵⁹ The argument that Christianity does feature circular sacred time, is I believe, a valid argument. However, feel that it is tangential to the central claim of this thesis regarding the nature of sacred time in Hinduism and will not in the future address it.

2.5 Problems with the Claim that All Sacred Time in Hinduism is Circular

Eliade placed particular emphasis on archaic religions and believed that more contemporary religions and human society in general, have lost the ability to experience circular sacred time.⁶⁰ The sacred is ignored and covered over such that those participating in a religion grounded in a historical timeline are not able to access circular sacred time. Eliade regarded the experience of any type of sacred time as more authentic than the experience of profane time but showed clear preferences for circular time as providing the most authentic experience. As I will discuss in more detail in later chapters, linear sacred time is grounded in history, as opposed to circular sacred time that connects to the time of creation.

According to Eliade, the originality and power of the time of creation are more authentic than a time made sacred later in history. Long provided an excellent summation of this point, writing that for religious persons participating archaic religions:

the sacred is equivalent to power and reality and the religious person desires to participate in that reality for as long as possible. But the religious experience of reality stands in striking contrast to the desacralized experience of modern societies, in which persons find it

⁶⁰ Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1957. 70-72.

difficult to rediscover the experience of religious persons in archaic societies.⁶¹

Eliade argued that the experience of the sacred is a more valuable experience than that of the profane, and therefore strongly favored those religions, such as Hinduism, which participate in the kinds of myths of creation that he felt can allow a person to access circular sacred time. Eliade showed a preference for the superiority of experiencing circular sacred time over both linear profane time and what I term linear sacred time.

For example, in *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, Eliade discussed the role that initiation has for youth in different human societies. In this context, Eliade described his theory that humans are “the end product of a mythical history”⁶² which is the *illud tempus*. Eliade believed that it then follows that humans in contemporary societies and “modern” religions regard themselves as the product of the totality of human history and they view themselves only in relation to that history. Their experience of the sacred, if such an experience even occurs, is a variety of the sacred founded in the profane linear history, not in the mythical time of origins. Because humans in archaic societies can recognize the power and creative force of the beginning of this time of creation, they have a more authentic understanding of the world. As Eliade noted “Furthermore, archaic man certainly has the right to consider himself more creative than modern man,

⁶¹ Long, Eugene Thomas. *Twentieth-Century Western Philosophy of Religion, 1900-2000*. edited by A. A. Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000. 170.

⁶² Eliade, Mircea. *Rites and Symbols of Initiation: The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper & Row, Publishers, Incorporated, 1958. 1975.xi.

who sees himself as creative only in respect to history.”⁶³ The person who experiences the sacred grounded in linear history (what I term linear sacred time) is excluded from experiencing the creative power of the time of origins. He connects to *a* particular event in history and not the superior experience of the *original* instance of creation.

Eliade seemed to regard the authenticity experienced by those in archaic religions as stemming from their ability to recognize that “everything creative and powerful that has ever happened took place in the beginning, in the Time of mythic.”⁶⁴ Humans in contemporary societies have only the context of history behind them and a view that history will continue unceasingly into the future that limits their understanding of the world. Such persons remain stuck on a linear timeline of present becoming past and anticipation of the future which limits their perspective. Eliade regarded humans in archaic societies as having a more authentic understanding of the world’s origins through their connection to the time of origins via the experience of circular sacred time. He emphasized that so-called archaic man refuses “to accept himself as a historical being, his refusal to grant value to memory and hence to the unusual events (i.e., events without an archetypical model) that in fact constitute concrete duration [profane time].”⁶⁵ Thus archaic man engages in the profane world in so much as it provides an access point for the sacred and the time of origins. Eliade viewed the time of origins as formulating the ultimate paradigm that provides humans

⁶³ ---. *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper & Brothers, 1954. 158.

⁶⁴ ---. *Rites and Symbols of Initiation: The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper & Row, Publishers, Incorporated, 1958. 1975. xi.

⁶⁵ ---. *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper & Brothers, 1954. 85.

with the template for social structures and culture. To be clear, Eliade did not regard archaic societies as being without a sense of linear history, and he did not view archaic societies as stagnant or somehow limited by a focus on the time of origins. Instead, he argued that the fundamental difference between an archaic and modern society is “the absence of historical consciousness in them.”⁶⁶ The lack of focus on purely human linear history means that such archaic societies have a deep and more authentic understanding of what it is to be human because of their connection to the sacred time of origins,⁶⁷ and understand that humans are *made* and do not make themselves. Contemporary societies have a different understanding and view man as self-made by actions that take place in history.⁶⁸ Linear profane time is still very much present and active in archaic societies, but it is not emphasized or valued as the most authentic mode of existence.

In *The Sacred and the Profane*, Eliade recognized that his emphasis on sacred time as circular causes problems for the idea of sacred time in some religions that fail to meet his conception of archaic. Two key examples of religions which Eliade felt are located in a linear historical time such that their festivals and rituals do not participate in circular sacred time are Judaism and Christianity. Eliade wrote:

For Judaism, time has a beginning and will have an end. The idea of cyclic time is left behind. Yahweh no longer manifests himself in *cosmic time*

⁶⁶ ---. *Rites and Symbols of Initiation: The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper & Row, Publishers, Incorporated, 1958. 1975. xii.

⁶⁷ Ibid. xi.

⁶⁸ Ibid. xv.

(like the gods of other religions) but in *historical time*, which is irreversible. Each new manifestation of Yahweh in history is no longer reducible to an earlier manifestation.⁶⁹

Eliade regarded Judaism as without circular sacred time, seeing it as lacking the usage of myth and ritual that in archaic religions allows humans to enter into the perception of sacred time. Note in particular that Eliade emphasized that because God, and by extension the sacred, are revealed through events in linear historical profane time, then when such historical events are encountered through religious experience they are “no longer reducible to an earlier manifestation.”⁷⁰ Eliade regarded Judaism as divorced from circular sacred time. The key to circular sacred time is that every manifestation of the sacred linked the experience directly back to the mythical time of origins. Every manifestation of the sacred through circular sacred time is a homogeneous *hierophany* that enables the eternal return to the time of origins and is fully divorced from human history. Religious individuals experiencing the sacred in Judaism must be accessing something other than circular sacred time – they are instead accessing linear historical sacred time which the experience of the sacred is grounded in history.

Then, continuing in the same vein, Eliade believed that Christianity moves even further way from the experience of circular sacred time:

⁶⁹ ---. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1957. 111.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 111.

Since God was *incarnated*, that is, since he took on a *historically conditioned human existence*, history acquires the possibility of being sanctified. The *illud tempus* evoked by the Gospels is a clearly defined historical time ... When a Christian of our day participates in liturgical time, he recovers the *illud tempus* in which Christ lived, suffered, and rose again—but it is no longer a mythical time, it is the time when Pontius Pilate governed Judea. For the Christian, too, the sacred calendar indefinitely rehearses the same events of the existence of Christ – but these events took place in history; they are no longer facts that happened at the *origin of time*, “in the beginning.”⁷¹

Here, Eliade indicated that the rituals of Christianity firmly place the time of this religion in a historical timeline and that this results in a different sort of sacred time that is linearly focused instead of circular. According to Eliade, Christianity finds itself decisively located in history and is therefore not able to evoke the eternal, circular sacred time established by ritual and festival that reenacts the time of origins or creations.

Jesus’ existence in the history of linear profane time means that Christianity has an *illud tempus* that is located in profane linear history and not in the mythical time of origins. Profane linear history exists before the birth of Jesus, so for Christianity, the moment of Jesus’ birth becomes established as a new and historical grounded *illud tempus*. In Eliade’s analysis, the focus of Christianity’s myths and rituals and on Christ as

⁷¹ Ibid. 111-112.

a historical figure means that participation in such myths and ritual allow for a different type of sacred experience, linear historical sacred time. When describing religions, Eliade characterized them as either archaic and featuring circular sacred time or historically grounded and unable to access the *illud tempus* of creation that results in circular sacred time. His categorizations seem to be all or nothing declarations that leave no room for participants in a religion to experience both types of sacred time. He does not go so far as to say that the sacred is absent from a Christianity or Judaism. Instead, Eliade believed the focus on sacred time grounded in profane history means that contemporary religions do not enable their adherents to participate in the time of origins. This failure is dangerous because it means that a religious individual in these religions cannot access the same level of authenticity of the sacred as a religious individual in an archaic religion. In his description of the sacred as encountered through Christianity, he emphasized that the sacred which is revealed is the time in which “Christ lived, suffered and rose again.”⁷² Eliade clearly indicated that some experience of sacred time is possible in Christianity, but it is not an experience of circular sacred time. While Eliade himself never made use of the phrases “linear sacred time” or “linear historical sacred time” I argue that these phrases accurately capture his conception of the sacred as experienced by those in for whom the sacred is revealed through an experience linked to linear profane history.

⁷² Ibid. 111.

Here, I should pause to note that another avenue of criticism would be to suggest that Eliade was incorrect to view Christianity as accessing only linear sacred time. For example, a scholar might argue that:

1. In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
2. The same was in the beginning with God.
3. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.⁷³

So then, as *logos*, Jesus then becomes the direct connection through which God created the world via the “Word.” Thus arguably rituals related to Jesus bring a participant into the experience of the origin of the universe at the time of creation through Jesus as the Word. So at a mythical level, the ritual brings us in touch with the creation and it being made new through the Word in Jesus. One experiences the origin of the Universe in what Jesus is – the Word. While I do believe that this is a valid argument to pursue, doing so is beyond the scope of this thesis and would be tangential to my focus on an analysis of sacred time experienced by a religious person in Hinduism. It is possible that Eliade did acknowledge the possibility of this when he discussed Christ as “the supreme *hierophany*”⁷⁴ but he included no further detail on this topic.

Eliade argued that *all* sacred time in Hinduism is circular in nature and drew clear divisions between religions that participate in circular as opposed to linear historical

⁷³ Bible, King James Version. John 1.1-3.

⁷⁴ Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1957. 11.

sacred time. He argued that when participating in the rites and ritual associated with their religions, someone of the Jewish or Christian faith is not participating in any connection to circular sacred time. Because Christianity and Judaism are firmly grounded in events that occurred in history, Eliade held that a religious individual who is participating in a ritual or festival in these religions consciously participates in the time of events that took place in the linear historical past. Thus, according to Eliade the religious person in Christianity and in Judaism experiences linear sacred time grounded in history instead of the circular sacred time related to the origin of the universe experienced by those in archaic religions. Participants in linear sacred time access a type of the sacred time, but in Eliade's view, it is substantially different from the experience a religious person would have in an archaic religion.⁷⁵

The argument I choose to focus on is that Eliade was too quick to characterize the experience of sacred time in Hinduism as solely circular. I propose that if we adopt Eliade's conceptions of linear sacred time and circular sacred time, then Eliade's argument that all sacred time is circular sacred time in Hinduism is fundamentally flawed. There are grave inconsistencies wherein if we compare his descriptions of the experience of linear sacred time in Christianity and Judaism to examples from primary source texts from Hinduism as it must also follow that linear sacred time exists alongside circular sacred time in Hinduism. It is true that Hinduism does feature

⁷⁵ Here, as mentioned earlier in the thesis, is another point where scholars can, and have, criticized Eliade for viewing Christianity as having only linear sacred time. While I do agree to this as a fair criticism of Eliade, I choose not to expand on this argument here. Instead, I focus on drawing out the inconsistencies within Eliade's own theory of time related to Hinduism.

numerous rituals and festivals that allow for the kind of temporal experience that Eliade believed circular sacred time promotes (the entrance of a person into a time identical to the time in which the original creation event occurred) but this alone does not prove that *all* sacred time in Hinduism is circular sacred time. In the following chapters, I will further explore and provide examples supporting Eliade's view that sacred time *can* be circular and at the same time provide alternative examples in Hinduism that meet the description of linear sacred time that Eliade applied to Christianity and Judaism. Eliade, while on the right track in some ways, created a definition of sacred time in archaic religions that is too narrow. In the following chapters, I will build an argument counter to Eliade's theory of fundamentally circular sacred time in Hinduism. I will argue religious experiences in Hinduism need not return the experiencer back to the *illud tempus* of creation in order to be experiences of sacred time. There are many examples of sacred time grounded in a linear historical experience in Hinduism with then would enable *homo religious* to experience linear sacred time. The context of the experience itself defines whether a person experiences linear or circular sacred time in Hinduism.

2.6 Chapter Two Summary and Preview of Chapter Three

At this point, it will be useful to provide an overview of what has been established in this first chapter and provide a preview of the structure of subsequent chapters. Firstly, to debate the nature of sacred time and its role in religious experience

I provided definitions of, and established the distinction between, sacred and profane time. In brief, profane is constituted by any human experience of time that does not involve a particular kind of religious experience. Profane time is the time of everyday life, experiences, clocks, calendars and historical timelines. In contrast, sacred time is an intentional experience where consciousness is apart from everyday profane time, or as Eliade referred to it, a *hierophany*. Sacred time is a temporal manifestation or experience of the divine. Following my discussion of the fundamental distinction between sacred and profane time, I presented Eliade's claim that all sacred time is circular in archaic religions such as Hinduism. I also noted that according to Eliade, in contemporary religions which have a strong foundation in history, such as Christianity, sacred time does exist but lacks the return to the *illud tempus* of creation that characterizes circular sacred time. I termed the sacred time experienced by a religious person in "modern" religions "linear sacred time" to more easily differentiate it from circular sacred time. Lastly, I noted my challenge to Eliade's claim by indicating the principle problem that I will address in future chapters, namely that Eliade's characterization of sacred time in Hinduism as *only* circular is too rigid of a distinction. Instead, I will argue that in Hinduism, *homo religiosus* can experience both circular *and* linear sacred time. Linear sacred time is not found exclusively in contemporary, historically rounded religions such as Christianity.

Subsequent chapters will proceed as follows: Eliade claimed that all sacred time is circular in so-called archaic religions. Therefore, my third chapter will involve an assessment of his claim utilizing examples from Hinduism. An exploration of the role of

sacred time in Hinduism is valuable for several reasons. First, because it represents what Eliade termed an archaic religion and because such religions are the principle focus of Eliade's arguments relating to sacred time. To give fair representation to his position, it seems appropriate to begin my analysis of sacred time in Hinduism with an exploration of circular sacred time. I will find that Hinduism does offer evidence to support that *some* sacred time is circular, but unlike Eliade, I do not find sufficient evidence to support a claim that *all* sacred time is circular in Hinduism.

The structure of the fourth chapter will be similar that of the third but with a focus on linear sacred time instead of circular sacred time. I will begin with a detailed explanation of the type of linear sacred time that Eliade assigned as the exclusive province of modern, historically grounded religions such as Christianity and Judaism but not to archaic religions. I will then explore the changing role of time in Hinduism through an analysis of primary sacred texts and show that while much of sacred time in Hinduism is circular, there are clearly linear elements present as well. Eliade's narrow definition of sacred time as a circular return to the *illud tempus* of creation in Hinduism fails to recognize that the experience of sacred time can in Hinduism be established by a broad range of experiences, even those rooted in linear time.

In the fifth chapter, I will draw together claims about circular and linear sacred time in Hinduism as detailed in chapters three and address some possible criticisms that Eliade might have posed against my theory that linear sacred time is present in Hinduism and not limited to "modern" religions. And lastly, in the sixth chapter, I offer a brief summation of my overall thesis and primary arguments.

CHAPTER 3. CIRCULAR SACRED TIME IN HINDUISM

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I established the distinction between profane time and sacred time and presented the basics of Eliade's claim that sacred time is circular sacred time in archaic religions such as Hinduism and linear sacred time in non-archaic religions such as Christianity and Judaism. Then I outlined a particular problem and inconsistency that I find with this claim, namely that it excludes so-called archaic religions, such as Hinduism, from any claim that their religions possess historically and temporally linear sacred time. Eliade argued the ontological status of circular sacred time is such that it is always identical with itself. Circular sacred time is a primordial time of origins in that a person experiencing sacred time is participating the same time as when the original event occurred. The value of participation in circular sacred time, according to Eliade is that it enables the *homo religiosus* in these archaic religions to access an authentic mode of being.

Throughout his extensive body of work, Eliade used examples from several of different religions to indicate the role and value of sacred time in archaic religions.

Hinduism is one of several religions that Eliade categorized as archaic, and this is one of the principle reasons that I have chosen to dedicate both this and the following chapter to an exploration of sacred time in Hinduism. As Mohanty noted, “It seems undeniable that, generally speaking, no Indian philosopher accorded to time that central place in ontology which modern western philosophy has.”¹ Since time, and specifically sacred time, are underlying threads that tie together many of the fundamental practices and beliefs in various schools of Hinduism, it seems only fitting that I examine Eliade’s claim in detail. Here I am not seeking to make assessment of the validity of conceptions of time held in various Indian philosophies stemming from Hinduism. Instead, I seek to resolve inconsistencies within Eliade’s theory of sacred time as applied to Hinduism.

A discussion of Hinduism is useful because it serves to illustrate how circular sacred time functions in an archaic religion, which is in keeping with Eliade’s argument. Hinduism also provides ample evidence that linear sacred time is also present in a so-called archaic religion which is a significant modification to Eliade’s original theory. Here, it is important to recall that I am not making the claim that sacred time in Hinduism *cannot* be circular in nature, but that I am making the argument that it is not necessarily true that *all* sacred time is circular sacred time in Hinduism. Indeed, as this chapter will illustrate, I am quite in agreement with Eliade up to a certain point – circular sacred time exists and is an important component of the sacred in some schools of Hinduism. In contrast to Eliade, I hold that linear sacred time is both existent and important to some

¹ Mohanty, Jitendra Nath. *Reason and Tradition in Indian Thought: An Essay on the Nature of Indian Philosophical Thinking*. Clarendon Press, 1993. 184.

schools of Hinduism. This argument will be addressed in depth in chapter four. My purpose in choosing to discuss sacred time in Hinduism is to reveal the mistakes that Eliade made by limiting Hinduism to possessing only circular sacred time and making linear sacred time the sole purview of non-archaic religions. I will provide a more complete and robust theory of sacred time in Hinduism by addressing both circular sacred time and linear sacred time in this religious tradition.

The structure of this chapter is as follows: In section 3.2 I briefly discuss profane time in Hinduism because there is a common misconception that Hinduism is based entirely on cyclical time. It is important to discard this idea in order to accurately understand the experience of sacred time in Hinduism. Then in section 3.3 of this chapter, I will present a summary of Eliade's comments on the circularity of sacred time in Hinduism. In section 3.4 of this chapter, I will focus on the history of Hinduism, and in doing so detail the ways in which Eliade's conception of circular sacred time are evidenced. First, I will cover the pre-classical period which includes dates from 2500-600 BCE and features the development of the principal sacred text of Hinduism, the *Vedas*. Secondly, I will cover the classical period which dates from approximately 500 BCE – 200 CE and there focus on sacred time as represented in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Thirdly, I will cover the post-classical period which includes the years from 200-1700 CE and was a period in which the six orthodox schools of Hinduism developed. Of these six schools, I will focus in particular on the Advaita Vedānta school, which is a subset of Vedānta. While other schools of Hinduism would make for interesting and relevant discussions on the question of the nature of sacred time, I believe Advaita Vedānta is particularly relevant

because it contains a more detailed examination of sacred time than other schools do and is both one of the most researched and most widely influential schools of Hinduism to date. Note that I do not seek to provide an exhaustive analysis of all aspects and instances of sacred time in Hinduism, or even in Advaita Vedānta itself. Instead, I aim to provide primary text examples of the experience of sacred time in Hinduism as case studies to modify Eliade's claim that all sacred time in Hinduism is circular. I will argue that some sacred time in Hinduism is circular and other sacred time in Hinduism is linear. Eliade did not distinguish between the viewpoints of different schools of Hinduism, and he made sweeping claims about the religion in its entirety. This is a weakness in his approach to understanding sacred time and means that he neglected to address specific schools such as Advaita Vedānta that contradict his theory. Thus, I will also address theories in Hinduism from the post-classical period, to which Eliade did not pay any particular attention. Here again, I will claim that when we examine the full history of the philosophic tradition in Hinduism, I conclude that linear sacred time of the type Eliade attributed exclusively to "modern" religions, such as Christianity, is very much in evidence alongside circular sacred time.

Before proceeding further, I should also note that while the dates of the three historical periods of Hinduism remain widely accepted, there are some alternative names for each period found in the literature. The pre-classical period is also called the "formative period" or "Vedic period," the classical period is also known as the "Epic period," and the post-classical period is sometimes termed the "Medieval," "middle," or "Sūtra period." Additionally, a fourth period termed the "scholastic" or "modern" period

might be added that covers the 1800's through today. Given that my focus is on Eliade's arguments about Hinduism as an "archaic" religion I do not address the modern period. For the sake of consistency, I utilize the terms pre-classical period, classical period and post-classical period to refer to the three periods. It is also worth noting, for those less familiar with this area of research, that Hinduism is not a single religion with a single codified set of beliefs but is rather an umbrella term referring to a wide variety of religious views and practices. I cannot, due to constraints of length, cover the positions about sacred time held by every school of thought in Hinduism. Such detailed coverage of time in all school of Hinduism is also unneeded since to validate my argument I only need to show that there are *some* instances of sacred time in Hinduism but not prove that it is present in every school of thought. Therefore, I have selected key areas in the development of Hinduism as case studies for the role of sacred time. I focus on the direct analysis of primary sacred texts and not on the numerous commentaries and interpretations of such texts that scholars have put forth.

3.2 Profane Time in Hinduism

Before discussing the changing role of sacred time in Hinduism, it is important to recall that simply because time is associated with a religion does not necessitate that the time is sacred time. In Hinduism, as with any other religion, profane time is a necessary part of the religion. As Mohanty noted, there are two principle mistakes that many persons make when discussing Indian philosophy relating to time and the idea of

circular time. Firstly, that Indian thought considers time to be unreal or an illusion and secondly that Indians “held a cyclic conception of time as contradistinguished from the Judeo-Christian conception of linear time.”² Here Mohanty referred to the misconception that profane time and sacred time in Hinduism are both considered circular in nature. It is, I think, relevant to clarify and add depth to both of these points before moving on to a discussion of what sacred time actually is in Hinduism and on what cycles of time do exist.³

There is a common misconception that in Hinduism as a whole, the material, phenomenal world, known as *māyā*, is an illusion and therefore lacks any kind of ontological standing and that because of this time itself is also illusory. The idea that *māyā* and time are unreal stems from a poorly refined understanding of Advaita Vedānta, which is currently the most studied school of thought (and thus that which most beginning students of the philosophy and religion of Hinduism might study). However, to say that *māyā* and time are illusory is not a complete understanding of Advaita Vedānta, and does not necessarily accord with beliefs in other schools of Hinduism. For instance, in the orthodox schools⁴ of *Nyāya* and *Vaiśeṣika*⁵ time is clearly

² Ibid. 184-185.

³ It is also relevant to note that other authors such as Arvind Sharma also highlighted these misconceptions about time in Hinduism.

⁴ In Hinduism an orthodox school (*Astika*) is one of the six principle schools of Hinduism that accept the validity and of the *Vedas* as *śruti*, sacred text, or “what is heard” meaning that the texts are of divine authorship. These schools are *Vedānta*, *Samkhya*, *Yoga*, *Nyāya*, *Mīmāṃsā* and *Vaiśeṣika*. Heterodox schools do not accept the *Vedas* as *śruti*, instead seeing the *Vedas* as either *smṛtis* (“what is written”, meaning of human authorship), or they disregard the *Vedas* entirely. Well known heterodox schools (*Nāstika*), include Buddhism, Jainism and *Cārvāka*.

⁵ Please note where words from Hinduism that have been adopted into the English language, I will not make use of diacriticals. I will use diacriticals if a term is not in common use in the English language, or if the author of the passage I cite in a quotation utilized diacriticals in their original text.

held to exist as time is an all pervasive, partless substance which exists as does the phenomenal world. Thus, both time and the physical world have ontological standing in these schools.

If one follows the misconception that the physical world lacks any kind of ontological status, it would appear to follow that if the physical world itself does not exist and is illusory, time cannot exist either due to the inseparable relation between space and time. There are a number of fundamental flaws with this conception of time and space in Hinduism. But suffice it to say, the root of this misconception is based on an overly simplistic understanding of how the physical world is treated in Hinduism. As Mohanty wrote:

Time is held to be unreal (in a deep metaphysical sense) only by the Advaita Vedānta system, but that too must be understood in the larger context that for Advaita Vedānta the empirical order with all its categories (space, time, causality, amongst others) are metaphysically unreal. Seen in this context, the unreality of time is not a special position; space, too, is unreal.⁶

While the point that the status of time in Advaita Vedānta will be discussed in greater depth in part three of this chapter, for now, it is enough to understand that the claim that time is “unreal” or “illusion” in the Advaita Vedānta school is a misconception. The word itself, *māyā*, is often translated as “illusion” or “unreal,” and this is incorrect. In

⁶ Long, Eugene Thomas. *Twentieth-Century Western Philosophy of Religion, 1900-2000*. edited by A. A. Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000. 185.

Advaita Vedānta, *māyā* is quite phenomenologically real and does possess ontological status. Time is typically linked with *Brahman* (Being that is the indescribable source of all being) and thus, the manifestations of *Brahman*, such as space and time, include phenomenal status because of their link to *Brahman* or Being. The correct conception of *māyā* is that “only *Brahman* is the reality while the phenomenal world, being dependent on *Brahman*, is not ultimate ... there can be no such thing as a pure illusion – every illusion is grounded in reality.”⁷ Time is described as illusion or unreal only because it is not the purest conception of *Brahman* possible, but merely a creation of *Brahman* that conceals a truer reality.

The second common misconception relating to time and Hinduism that should be addressed is that *all* time (both profane and sacred) in Hinduism is circular or has a cyclic nature so that no linear time exists in this religion. Clearly, a paradox emerges if we adopt this conception of time in Hinduism. Although cycles of both profane and sacred time do both exist in Hinduism, this should not imply that all time in Hinduism is cyclical. The existence of linear profane time must be present in Hinduism in order for profane temporal cycles such as the *karmic* cycle of birth, death, and rebirth to exist. These so-called cycles require the existence of a linear timeline to be coherent. Additionally, as shown earlier, the sacred manifests itself through the medium of the profane, so profane time is needed for a person to experience circular sacred time. For example, consider a succession of birth, death, and rebirth into a new body and life, “If

⁷ Puligandla, R. "Time and History in the Indian Tradition." *Philosophy East and West*, vol. 24, no. 2, 1974, pp. 165-170. 165-166.

these cycles succeeded each other, such succession requires a non-cyclic time.”⁸ Linear profane time does exist in Hinduism – the cyclical sacred structures within Hinduism require that profane time proceeds in a linear fashion. For instance, the *karmic* cycle of birth, death, and rebirth has an end. Eventually, a *ātman* has exhausted its *karmic* debt, and it reaches a place in the *karmic* cycle where *moksha* and freedom from the cycle can be attained. Additionally, the *karmic* cycle itself is not an endless circle but a process of births through lived time. *Karma*, generally speaking, deals with the actions taken in an individual’s previous life that then creates *dharma*, or obligation to accomplish certain things in the current life and future lives. If time were truly a circle, this cycle would be irrational, and it would quite simply fall apart given that linear time is needed to produce in *karma* and *dharma*.

Consider the following example as an illustration of the above principles of *karma* and *dharma*. This example is overly simplistic but serves to clarify the general use of linear profane time in the *karmic* cycle. Thalia is incarnated in the present life as a middle-class woman who owns and operates a small store and employs two other individuals. In a previous life, Thalia had an upper-middle class background and operated a large business with many employees. However, in her prior life as a businessperson, Thalia practiced unethical business dealings that led to strife and problems for her family and employees. Now, in her present life, Thalia finds herself with negative *karma* that she earned from her poor ethical practices in her prior life.

⁸ Mohanty, Jitendra Nath. *Reason and Tradition in Indian Thought: An Essay on the Nature of Indian Philosophical Thinking*. Clarendon Press, 1993. 186.

She finds herself reincarnated in a position of lower status as a result, where she may face more suffering or challenges, and she has moved further away from *moksha*. In her present life, Thalia may face some situations related to her *dharma* where she could choose to make good, ethical decisions that help to negate the negative *karma* she earned in the prior life. Both her present life and prior life have been lived on a linear, profane timeline. Thalia's prior life occurred temporally before her present life, and any subsequent lives will occur after her present life. Thalia's *ātman* (soul) is participating in the cyclical cycle of rebirth where it will continue to be born into a body, live out that life, die in that body and subsequently be reborn into a new body until the *karmic* debt is nullified and *moksha* is attained. At that time, *ātman* will no longer participate in the *karmic* cycle and no longer be reborn in physical bodies. Linear profane time is needed to enable a progression of one life to the next.

Additionally, there is indeed an idea in Hinduism that time is eternal, or lacking an end or beginning but “to represent time as beginningless and endless (*anādi* and *ananta*) is, as should be obvious, not representing it as cyclic.”⁹ The following discussion of one system of units of profane time measurement in Hinduism aids in understanding that not all time is circular time and that profane time evidences both linear and cyclic time. In Hinduism, there are a number of different ways for measuring or establishing units of profane time. To illuminate this, consider *yugas* from Indian philosophy, as discussed by Mohanty. In this theory, the universe has been created and destroyed multiple times and a system of time measurement is related to this process. The

⁹ Ibid. 186.

current year is part of the fourth quarter of the present cycle, known as the Kali Yuga. A single *yuga* or epoch represents one-fourth of a *mahayuga*, which is called a *kalpa*.¹⁰ It should be noted, that not all *yugas* are of equal duration. The first *yuga* is the longest, and the *fourth* is the shortest. Admittedly, a *yuga* is a large unit of profane time measurement compared to profane time that we typically think of regarding solar minutes, days, and years, but there are analogously large units of measurement outside of Hinduism such as galactic years.¹¹ The units of time relating to *yugas* and related measures of time in Hinduism might by some be called “sacred,” but this is only in the sense that they are linked to religion. Although *yugas* are part of a sacred calendar, they are exemplary of profane, not sacred time. While there are several, differing theories of calculating the exact duration of the *yugas*, the chart below should provide an example of how such profane cycles of time can be calculated.

¹⁰ For a complete explanation of *yugas*, *mahayugas*, and related units of time measurement in Brahma time please see Rao, Rallapalli Venkateswara. *The Concept of Time in Ancient India*. C.P. Gautam, 2004.. Eliade also explored *yugas* in more depth in Eliade, Mircea. "Time and Eternity in Indian Thought." *Man and Time: papers from the Eranos Yearbooks*, translated by Ralph Manheim, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951. 177-180.

¹¹ A galactic year is equal to the amount of time it takes our solar system to complete one full orbit around the Milky Way Galaxy. This is approximately equivalent to 225 million terrestrial years.

Table 1: *Yugas* as a Measure of Profane Time in Hinduism¹²

Yuga	Time Calculation	Total Years
<i>Krta</i>	4000+(400x2)	= 4800
<i>Treta</i>	3000+(300x2)	= 3600
<i>Dvapara</i>	2000+(200x2)	= 2400
<i>Kali</i>	1000+(100x2)	= 1200
Total	10000+(1000x2)	= 12,000

The total of 12,000 thousand years constitutes an age of the gods. One thousand of these ages constitutes a single day of *Brahman* and a night of *Brahman*. The age of Manu, *Manvantara*, consists of seventy-one times the age of the gods. Rao expounds further upon this:

In the construction of the large cycles of Cosmological time, the figures used both in Cosmology and in Astronomy come to be central. In what has been called the Yuga Astronomy of the fifth century A.D., Indian astronomers calculated that a *Kalpa*, the largest period of time, consisted of 4320 million years. The astronomers may have borrowed the notion of a *Kalpa* from the Puranic sources since they required a long period of time as the basis for their calculations.¹³

¹² Rao, Rallapalli Venkateswara. *The Concept of Time in Ancient India*. C.P. Gautam, 2004. 89-90.

¹³ Ibid. 90.

Profane time clearly exists in terms of units of measurement in Hinduism. Much as we might view centuries as units of measurement for a collection of 100 years, *yugas* serve to delineate different profane time periods in Hinduism.

Yugas may “cycle” in the sense that there are multiple *mahayugas*, but there is nothing sacred about that “cycle.” Mohanty made a useful analogy to economic cycles to clarify this point.¹⁴ For example, the word “cycle” is used to denote that we are in a cycle of recession or that we are in a cycle of inflation. Economic cycles occur multiple times along the linear timeline; therefore, as a concept they are circular. However, each individual instance of an economic cycle is unique. There may be multiple instances of an inflation-recession cycle taking place at different points in profane history. They are never identical to one another. There are certainly similarities between each particular cycle, but there is no sense of eternity about what occurs in each cycle. These cycles are ways of identifying common sets of events in a profane, linear period.

3.3 Eliade’s Conception of Circular Sacred Time in Hinduism

There is no single text in Eliade’s copious body of work wherein all of his comments on the sacred in Hinduism are located. As Allen noted, Eliade focused on examples from archaic religions in his exploration of the sacred, and in particular on the role of myth as essential establishing the experience of the sacred. Eliade spent several

¹⁴ Mohanty, Jitendra Nath. *Reason and Tradition in Indian Thought: An Essay on the Nature of Indian Philosophical Thinking*. Clarendon Press, 1993. 186.

years in India, and it was there “that he discovered the meaning of religious symbolism, the language of myth, and a kind of religiosity observed in the Indian peasant religion and folklore”¹⁵ These experiences then proved to be of profound influence upon his scholarly work. I do not seek to provide an exhaustive catalog of Eliade’s copious, but scattered, comments on Hinduism, but I will instead summarize his arguments with a few case examples to illustrate his overall view on sacred time in Hinduism. Eliade mentioned Hinduism in the majority of his philosophic texts, along with a great many other religions and cultures. He did not draw on any particular period of history, or school of Hinduism in a systematic way, excepting his analysis of the yoga school of practice in his book *Yoga*. Because Eliade did not limit himself to examples from particular schools of Hinduism, he had a tendency to make broad generalizations.¹⁶ Thus, I feel that it is fair to base my counter arguments against his theory on a variety of different time periods and schools of thought in Hinduism.

To begin, recall that Eliade held that “the experience of sacred time will make it possible for religious man periodically to experience the cosmos as it was *in principio*, that is, at the mythical moment of Creation.”¹⁷ This means that when a person experiences sacred time, the person is not participating in a reenactment of the event in question such as a historical recreationist might take part in a reenactment of a battle in the American Civil War. The religious person is engaging in the *hierophany*. They are

¹⁵ Allen, Douglas. *Myth and Religion in Mircea Eliade*. Routledge, 2002. 107.

¹⁶ Some scholars have criticized Eliade’s tendency to generalize when discussing different religious and spiritual traditions.

¹⁷ Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1957. 65.

physically participating in the linear profane time in which the event is currently occurring, and simultaneously they are having a first hand, conscious experience of the original event at the time that the original event takes place. Through participation in myth, festival or ritual, Eliade felt that the sacred, which has been veiled or covered over by the profane, can be revealed. Phenomenologically, the everyday world and events occurring in profane time are a distraction and mode of concealing the authenticity of the sacred. Rituals and festivals are access points through which individuals can intentionally access an authentic experience of the sacred. What we call myths, or stories of creation that occurred long ago in the past, Eliade felt are actually the “various and sometimes dramatic irruptions of the sacred into the world.”¹⁸ Such “irruptions of the sacred” help individuals to understand the creative power behind the existence of their world and to also understand that reality itself has been created.¹⁹

In the next sections of this chapter, I will provide a representative sample of the different areas in Hinduism through which an individual can experience circular sacred time and explain Eliades’ theory about the authenticity such an experience brings. As Allen noted, Eliade was largely disinterested in “the abstract analysis found in Advaita Vedānta and other forms of Indian philosophy, including those commonly analyzed as devaluing the cycles of worldly existence as mere illusion.”²⁰ Instead, he preferred other schools such as some sub-schools of *Yoga* and “the concrete, life-affirming

¹⁸ Ibid. 97.

¹⁹ Ibid. 97.

²⁰ Allen, Douglas. *Myth and Religion in Mircea Eliade*. Routledge, 2002. 257.

religious and mythic world of Indian peasants.”²¹ This, of course, is rather different from my approach to discussing Hinduism later on in this work, where part of my focus will be on the role of sacred time in Advaita Vedānta. I would, here, disagree with Eliade when he claimed that Vedānta “devalues” worldly existence. Instead, taking a more positive tone than that expressed by Eliade, I contend that Advaita Vedānta places value upon worldly existence as a necessary and authentic experience for the individual. In disregarding Vedānta and also *bhakti*, (devotion), Eliade failed to address a major school of Hinduism and thus missed a number of examples that offer proof for the coexistence of circular and linear sacred time in Hinduism. Section 3.4.1 of this chapter will most closely address Eliade’s preferred period of Hinduism, the pre-classical era. However, I think that a discussion of the later development of Hinduism, including Advaita Vedānta and an analysis of sacred texts that are *itihāsa*, “history,” will provide a more thorough and rigorous understanding of the nature, role and experience of sacred time in Hinduism.

3.4 Circular Sacred Time and its Role in Religious Experience in Hinduism

This section is divided into three subsections, (3.4.1) the pre-classical period (discussing the *Vedas* and early *Upaniṣads*), (3.4.2) the classical period (discussing the later *Upaniṣads* and *Bhagavad-gītā*) and (3.4.3) the post-classical period. In each of these three periods, I will explore select case examples to support and expand on

²¹ Ibid. 257.

Eliade's notion that circular sacred time exists in Hinduism. While I do believe that his overall claim that *only* circular sacred time exists in Hinduism is misguided, it would be unfair and inaccurate to deny that there are significant elements of circular sacred time in Hinduism. To that effect, in this chapter, I will support Eliade's claim that circular sacred time exists in Hinduism before addressing my arguments about the existence of linear sacred time in Hinduism in chapter four.

3.4.1 Circular Sacred Time in the Pre-Classical Period

Central to the development of Hinduism is a set of sacred texts, collectively known as the *Vedas*. Although these texts were originally orally recited and later recorded in Sanskrit, the *Vedas* are considered to be *śruti* text by the six orthodox schools of Hinduism, meaning that they are of divine authorship. As *śruti* texts, the *Vedas* are "that which is heard" by human beings or "revealed" to humans as opposed to other texts which are *smṛtis* "that which is remembered" and recount historical events, such as the *Bhagavad-gītā*. The *Vedas* consist of four Sanskrit texts: The *Ṛg Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, *Sāma Veda* and *Atharva Veda*.²² Each of these four books is then further divided into four kinds of texts – *Mantras* (hymns), *Brāhmaṇas* (priestly descriptions of rituals and sacrifice), *Āraṇyakas* (forest books) and *Upaniṣads* (sittings

²² The spelling of the title of each of these books can vary. They are also often termed the *Rigveda*, *Yajurveda*, *Samaveda* and *Atharvaveda*. I have chosen to adopt Radhakrishnan and Moore's spelling of the book titles as indicated in their text *A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy*, *Ṛg Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, *Sāma Veda* and *Atharva Veda*.

near a teacher and philosophical commentaries). The two books of the *Vedas* which are particularly relevant to our discussion of sacred time is the *Atharva Veda*, as it features the some of the most philosophical teachings and the early *Upaniṣads* which also offer significant links to the circularity of sacred time in Hinduism's pre-classical period.

An excellent place to begin examining circular sacred time in Hinduism is an example from *The Sacred and the Profane* where Eliade described the construction of a fire altar. In the passage below, Eliade was referring to a previous chapter of *The Sacred and the Profane*; wherein he discussed the building of the altar as the creation of sacred space. Such a ritual would have been taking place in profane time, or what Rao discusses as ritual time: "Seasonal rituals often evolved from routine activities of a given society over the year, e.g., the grazing citrus of herders or the sowing and harvesting periods of cultivators."²³ The construction of the fire altar was repeated at particular intervals in linear profane time. The fact that the ritual is repeated annually is not yet sufficient to prove that it allows a person to experience sacred time. Recall that, as earlier evidenced by *yugas*, repetition alone is not enough to establish the experience of sacred time. The intentionality of the individual participating in the ritual is key since, without the intent to connect the physical activity to the sacred, the altar remains nothing more than a stack of bricks existing in profane time in the profane material world. The sacred is revealed through the profane via the *coincidentia oppositorum*.

²³ Rao, Rallapalli Venkateswara. *The Concept of Time in Ancient India*. C.P. Gautam, 2004. 86.

Now referring to the fire altar and its construction, Eliade wrote:

The texts add that “the fire altar is the year” and explain its temporal system as follows: the 360 bricks of the enclosure correspond to the 360 nights of the year, and the 360 *yajusmati* bricks to the 360 days (*Shatapatha Brāhmana*, X, 5, 4, 10; etc.) this is as much to say that, with the building of each fire altar, not only is the world remade but the year is built too; in other words, *time is regenerated by being created anew ...* It is not a matter of profane time, of mere temporal duration, but of the sanctification of cosmic time. What is sought by the erection of the fire altar is to sanctify the world, hence to place it in a sacred time.²⁴

The key point is that while the physical labor and ritual of building this altar might be taking place in profane time, the person experiencing the construction of the altar is participating in the establishment of sacred time. The individual experiences a *hierophany*. Physically it takes some amount of profane hours to build the altar and the ritual building of such an altar occurs at repeated intervals through the years. According to Eliade, participating in a ritual of this type allows an individual to become a contemporary of the divine. The person is not experiencing a memory, recollection, or reenactment of the creation of “cosmic time” but is experiencing the establishment of that time of origins first hand, as it is originally took place. “Through the paradox of rite,

²⁴ Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1957. 74.

every consecrated space coincides with the center of the world, just as the time of any ritual coincides with the mythical time of the “beginning.”²⁵ Recall the earlier example of Cleo sitting under a tree from chapter two. On the one hand, the tree is homogenous with other profane trees, nothing special. For Cleo, the tree could also be a manifestation of the sacred that enables her to enter sacred time. Here, the ritual of building the fire altar provides much the same effect. The person who participates in the fire altar ritual is building a physical altar, and the construction takes place in linear profane time. Each year the ritual of creating the fire altar is homogenous with all the past years in which the ritual took place. However, through the act of constructing the altar according to religious principles, the altar becomes a manifestation of the sacred. The person’s consciousness is phenomenologically present in the circular sacred time at the moment of the creation of the universe. Each year any people who participate in the fire altar ritual experience a manifestation of circular sacred time enabled by the physical act of building the altar. In this case, I believe Eliade was correct to state that the creation of the fire altar is an example of circular sacred time. The fire altar is also representative of Eliade’s repetition of the cosmogony concept. Eliade stated that through repetition of the cosmogony “whatever is founded has its foundation at the center of the world.”²⁶ In this case, the fire altar becomes the symbolic center of the universe and enables those participating in the ritual of the fire altar to access the sacred time of creation associated with the center of the universe.

²⁵ ---. *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper & Brothers, 1954. 20.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 18.

Rao offered a more detailed explanation of the fire altar construction in his analysis of the *Vedas*. As Rao explained, there are two “junctions” each day, one at dawn and the other at twilight. Originally, Rao explained that the daily sacrifices that took place at each “juncture” established the continuation of and continuity of time.²⁷ Eventually, as the rituals developed further “the building of the fire altar in the *Brāhmanas* stretched out over a year, it was the year, which became the large unit of time. The sacrifice remained the foundation of the temporal structure, each brick of the altar corresponding to one day of the year.”²⁸ The building of the fire altar allowed participants to participate in circular sacred time where the world and time itself is renewed each year.

A similar example to the fire altar can be found, according to Eliade, in the New Year rituals and festivals. In discussing the role of the New Year, Eliade wrote that “Since the New Year is a reactualization of the cosmogony, it implies *starting time over again at its beginning*, that is, restoration of the primordial time, the “pure” time, that existed at the moment of Creation.”²⁹ Each celebration of the new year of profane time enables the *coincidentia oppositorum* wherein the New Year is simultaneous a measure of profane time and also an access point through which with *homo religiosus* can intentionally experience the sacred mythical time of creation. For Eliade, New Year’s celebrations serve a dual purpose:

²⁷ Rao, Rallapalli Venkateswara. *The Concept of Time in Ancient India*. C.P. Gautam, 2004. 2-3.

²⁸ Ibid. 2-3.

²⁹ Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1957. 77-78.

(1) through annual repetition of the cosmogony, time was regenerated, that is, it began again as sacred time, for it coincided with the *illud tempus* in which the world had first come into existence; (2) by participating ritually in the end of the world and in its re-creation, any man became contemporary with the *illud tempus*; hence, he was born anew, he began life over again with his reserve of vital forces *intact*, as it was at the moment of his birth.³⁰

Each year celebrations reoccur. Annually there is a particular celebration at a given time. Historically, regarding profane time, the celebration that occurs this year can be discussed as distinct from the celebration that occurred in the previous year and as distinct from the celebration that will take place in the following year. In other words, the celebration occurring in year X is at a different period of profane time from the celebration occurring in year Y. Each year serves as a separate unit of measurement for profane time. For Eliade, the New Year's celebration is not simply marking the beginning of a new unit of profane time. Instead, the New Year's celebration literally is a recreation of the original event of the creation of the cosmogony. Each year the New Year's festival and rites involve an experience of sacred time wherein the celebrating individual is participating in the reality of the creation of the world. As Allen put it "In Eliade's interpretation of the nature, structure, function, and meaning of myth, mythic believers, actually become contemporaneous with the supernatural beings and other

³⁰ Ibid. 80.

sacred realities described in their myths.”³¹ Therefore, one who participates in the rituals and myth associated with the New Year is experiencing a transcendence of profane time and entrance into a pure experience of sacred time. The consciousness of a religious individual participating with intentionality in the New Year festival in one year of profane time will be literally present in the identical original moment of creation as anyone participating in subsequent New Year’s ceremonies in future units of profane time. An experience of circular sacred time takes place.

Beyond annually reoccurring festivals and rituals, such as those associated with the New Year, Eliade also believed that sacred time can be established through any rite or festival wherein the participants are in some way participating in the “time of origins.” Or in other words, they participate in “the time of the cosmogony, the instant that saw the appearance of the most immense of realities, the world.”³² It is not necessary for a rite to be repeatable at measured and specific intervals of profane time in order for it to enable the experience of circular sacred time. For instance, marriage ceremonies, which take place on various days with different participants, can also provide participants with the experience of sacred time. To support this claim, Eliade quoted a section of the *Bṛihadāranyaka Upaniṣad* VI.iv.20 and *Atharva Veda* XIV.2.71. Eliade felt that “the cosmogony myth is pre-eminently the paradigmatic myth; it serves as a model for human behavior. This is why human marriage is regarded as an imitation of the cosmic

³¹ Allen, Douglas. *Myth and Religion in Mircea Eliade*. Routledge, 2002. 191.

³² Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1957. 81.

hierophany."³³ In the following passage, I provide a lengthier version of the quotation Eliade referred to from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* wherein a husband is speaking to his wife about a child he wishes to have:

20. Then he embraces her, and says: 'I am Ama (breath), thou art Sa (speech). Thou art Sa (speech), I am Ama (breath). I am the Saman, thou art the Rik. I am the sky, thou art the earth. Come, let us strive together, that a male child may be begotten.'³⁴

At first glance, a passage related to marriage and the creation of a child may seem to have little to do with sacred time. However, Eliade felt that the ritual of participation in marriage and then later the creation of a child is analogous to the creation of heaven and earth. For Eliade the reference to the husband as “sky” and the wife as “earth” is not just a metaphor – it indicates that the two, when participating the marriage ritual are participating in sacred time – the time of origins, the time of the creation of the world. Eliade noted “Even so early as the *Atharva Veda* (XIV, 2, 71) groom and bride are assimilated to heaven and earth.”³⁵ Their joining through the marriage allows them to participate in the time creation originally occurs – in other words, sacred time. The two transcend the limits of profane time (of everyday life) and experience the sacred. The myth [in this case a marriage myth]:

³³ Ibid. 145-6.

³⁴ Muller, F. Max. *The Upanishads*. The Clarendon press, 1879. *The Sacred Books of the East*, vol. I, XV. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, VI.iv.20.

³⁵ Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1957. 145-6.

proclaims the appearance of a new cosmic situation or of a primordial event. Hence, it is always the recital of a creation; it tells how something was accomplished began to *be*. It is for this reason that myth is bound up with ontology; it speaks only of *realities*, of what *really* happened, of what was fully manifested.³⁶

The husband and wife who are joined in marriage are on one level merely participating in a milestone of their lives, the date of which can be marked on a calendar of profane historical time. However, on another level, they transcend the profane and experience the time in which the first “marriage” occurred – that of heaven and earth on the date of creation. The sacred time or moment of creation is a reality for them, not just a story or myth; they are consciously present in that original moment of sacred time. Arguably, it is correct to view this as circular sacred time since with each marriage ceremony that is performed, through their participation, the husband and wife return to the same original moment of creation. Regardless of when in profane time the ceremony is taking place the couple involved experience the same sacred moment of creation as any other couple who participates in the same ceremony at a different moment of profane time.

Rites such as the building of the fire altar, festivals such as the New Year’s tradition and other ceremonies can all serve to establish circular sacred time in Hinduism. As the above examples show, circular sacred time can be found at many points in the history of Hinduism but the role of sacred circular time is most clearly expressed in the pre-classical period.

³⁶ Ibid. 95.

To expand on Eliade's analysis, I will examine further portions of the *Atharva Veda* which provide some useful insights on conceptions of time in pre-classical Hinduism.

5. Time created yonder heaven, Time also these earths; impelled by Time, what has been and what is to be take their several positions.
6. Time created lordship, in Time the sun shines; in Time are all beings; in Time the eye looks abroad.
8. In Time is fervor, in Time the Supreme, in Time the Holy Word (*brahman*) is concentrated. Time is the lord of all, he who was the father of the Lord of creatures (Prājapati, creator-god).³⁷

This passage emphasizes that Time comes into existence when undifferentiated *Brahman* becomes differentiated *Brahman*. During the time of origins time plays a vital role and it precedes the creation of the material world, beings, creatures and other beings. This sentiment is emphasized with "in Time are all beings".³⁸ Such elements of creation are subjects of Time as "the lord of all"³⁹ and such phenomena exist in the medium of time. A person who intentionally experiences circular sacred time can experience Time as it was at the mythical origin of the universe. They move beyond the experience of time as a measure of the events in their profane existences and experience the more "real" and authentic understanding of Time as part of the sacred

³⁷ Edgerton, Franklin. *The Beginnings of Indian Philosophy*. Harvard University Press, 1965. *Atharva Veda*. 19.53.5-6, 8, 10.

³⁸ Ibid. *Atharva Veda*. 19.536.

³⁹ Ibid. *Atharva Veda*. 19.53.8.

itself. In recognizing the difference between profane time and the sacred time at the moment of creation a religious individual can gain clarity about the truth of their own origin as a being created from the differentiation of *Brahman*.

Another interesting text from the *Rg Veda* is the *Hymn of Creation* which clearly establishes that the time of creation itself was timeless or eternal. Consider the following:

1. Non-being then existed not nor being:
 There was no air, nor sky that is beyond it ...
2. Death then existed not nor life immortal;
 Of neither night nor day was any token.
 By its inherent force the One breathed windless:
 No other thing then that beyond existed ...
4. Desire entered the One in the beginning:
 It was the earliest seed, of thought the product ...⁴⁰

In the above passage, we see that before the time of creation neither “being” nor “non-being” existed. There simply was the eternal. The first moment of creation, “the earliest seed” began with a desire from the One, and from that, creation spills forth. The One that desires to begin creation existed before the creation of time. It is this timelessness that Eliade focused on as the moment of creation or time of origins that one returns to via the eternal return and circular sacred time. A person who seeks to experience the sacred in an archaic religion, according to Eliade, yearns to access the

⁴⁰ *Rg Veda, Hymn of Creation*. X.129.1-2, 4.

timeless eternity described in the *Hymn to Creation* because it is heterogeneous. It is more real and valid than the subsequent homogenous iterations of creation that follow.

The early *Upaniṣads* also contain clear examples of circular sacred time in Hinduism. Here I should note that while there are over 200 *Upaniṣads* in total, only somewhere between 10-14 *Upaniṣads* are considered to be early *Upaniṣads* and date to the pre-classical period. There is scholarly debate about which *Upaniṣads* qualify as early *Upaniṣads*, but the following are typically considered to have been formulated in the pre-classical period, prior to 500 CE: *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, *Aitareya Upaniṣad*, *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad*, *Kena Upaniṣad*, *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, *Isa Upaniṣad*, *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, *Praśna Upaniṣad*, and *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*. While not all of these early *Upaniṣads* are relevant to a discussion of time in Indian philosophy, several prove instrumental to understanding sacred time.

As further support for the timeless nature of *Brahman*, consider the following passage from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. This *Upaniṣad* elaborates in greater depth upon the creation of the material universe, humans, *ātman*, soul, and nature of *Brahman* itself (as best humans can understand it).

10. Verily, in the beginning, this world was *Brahman*.

It knew only itself: “I am *Brahman*!” Therefore, it became the All.

Whoever of the gods became awakened to this; he indeed became it; likewise in the case of seers, likewise in the case of men ...

... Whoever thus knows “I am *Brahman*!” becomes this All; even the

gods have not power to prevent his becoming thus, for he becomes their self ...⁴¹

Later on, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* continues:

1. There are, assuredly, two forms of *Brahman*: the formed and the formless, the mortal and the immortal, the stationary and the moving, the actual and the yon.⁴²

Here we see reiterated that all created things originate from *Brahman* and that when a person, God, or seer, who is created from *Brahman*, enters into an experience of the sacred, he participates in the realization that he is indeed part of *Brahman*.

Participation in circular sacred time enables him to recognize that he is part of the timeless nature of *Brahman* itself and participates in the *illud tempus* that was the *Brahman* at the time of creation. Due to limitations of human consciousness when a human enters into sacred time and the *hierophany* of knowing the sacred as *Brahman*, there are some limitations on his knowledge.

That Self (*Ātman*) is not this, it is not that [this] (*neti, neti*). It is unseizable, for it cannot be seized; indestructible, for it cannot be destroyed; unattached, for it does not attach itself; is unbound, does not tremble, is not injured ...⁴³

The self, in entering into an experience of the sacred is able to recognize that it is not merely a physical body, a collection of memories, experiences, etc. It is, in fact,

⁴¹ *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. I.iv.10.

⁴² *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. II.iii.1.

⁴³ *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. IV.V.15.

differentiated *Brahman* and thus part of the universe itself. The *ātman* experiences the circularity of sacred time in this instance and has an intentional experience of the sacred origins of itself in the *illud tempus*.

Consider a later section from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*:

6. She [Gārgī Vācakanvī] said: “That, O Yājñavalkya, which is above the sky, that which is beneath the earth, that which is between these two, sky and earth, that which people call the past and the present and the future—across what is that woven, warp and woof?”
8. He said: “That, of Gārgī, *brāhmins* call the Imperishable ... unaging, undying, without fear, immortal ...”⁴⁴

In this passage, there was a discussion of past, present, and future. Gārgī stated that time (the past, present, and future) is all pervasive throughout the earth, the sky, and the entirety of creation. She then questioned what it is that causes time in the form of past, present, and future to exist. The response is that it is the “Imperishable” and “immortal” which is *Brahman*. So again, the timeless *Brahman* is established at the cause of time and *Brahman* is the eternal force behind the creation of the phenomenal world.

Another early *Upaniṣad* that elaborated on eternity and the immortal nature of *ātman* in Hinduism is the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*. This *Upaniṣad* is written in dialogue form as of questions and answers between a questioner and Yama (Death). In the following

⁴⁴ *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* III.viii.6, 8.

passage from the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, there is a clear statement that self, *ātman*, is eternal, and constant and does not perish when the material body perishes.

18. The wise one [i.e., the *Ātman*, the self] is not born, nor dies.

This one has not come from anywhere, has not become anyone.

Unborn, constant, eternal, primeval, this one

Is not slain when the body is slain.⁴⁵

This means that if a religious individual comes to acknowledge the true nature of *ātman* as eternal, then he will recognize that there is nonduality between *ātman* and *Brahman*. By understanding the eternal nature of *ātman*, an individual can enter into an experience of circular sacred time. Also from the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*:

3. Know thou the self (*ātman*) as riding in a chariot,

The body as the chariot.

Know thou the intellect (*buddhi*) as the chariot-driver,

And the mind as the reins.

12. Though He is hidden in all things,

That Self shines not forth.

But He is seen by subtle seers

With superior, subtle intellect.

15. ... Without beginning, without end, higher than the great, stable--

By discerning That, one is liberated from the mouth of death.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*. II.18.

⁴⁶ *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*. III.3, 12, 15.

These passages from the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* emphasize that *ātman* is outside of time and while it might interact with the profane linear time and history when within an individual body on earth (*ātman* as riding in the chariot of the body), *ātman* itself is without time, is an element of the eternal time of creation. The “He” referenced in the above passages refers to *Brahman* and acknowledges that the sacred is present in all things, although “hidden” such that only those who deliberately seek out religious understanding may come to realize this truth. Lastly, consider one more passage from the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*:

14. When are liberated all

The desires that lodge in one’s heart,

Then a mortal becomes immortal!

Therein he reaches *Brahman!*⁴⁷

In the above, liberated refers to the *ātman* attaining freedom from the cycle of birth and rebirth and permanently entering into a state of being undifferentiated from *Brahman*. “Mortal becomes immortal” does not mean that *ātman* itself has mortality. It means that when *ātman* is freed from the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, it is freed from interaction with profane time and exists solely in the sacred time of creation that is *Brahman*.

Another early *Upaniṣad* to consider is the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, which is chronologically one of the oldest *Upaniṣads*. This *Upaniṣad* contains a multitude of different teachings, but the most relevant section to this discussion is the following

⁴⁷ *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*. VI.14.

passage: “In the beginning this world was merely non-being. It was existant. It developed. It turned into an egg.”⁴⁸ This passage continues with a metaphor of the creation of the earth, sky and other elements of the phenomenal world. Here we see it reiterated once again that at the time of creation, there was non-being, there was simply *Brahman*. Time did not exist, *Brahman* simply was. Also in this *Upaniṣad* are metaphors regarding fig and salt in water. For example, a teacher tells a student to place some salt in water and let it sit overnight. Later, the teacher asks the student to bring the salt back and the student finds that he cannot separate the salt from the water. This is then used as a metaphor for *ātman* and *Brahman*. *Ātman* is always part of *Brahman* and when an individual attains liberation from the *karmic* cycle *ātman* becomes indistinguishable from *Brahman*.⁴⁹ This reinforces the idea that *Brahman* is in all things and to *Brahman*, all things return. *Time* is introduced through the creative acts of *Brahman*, which is in keeping with Eliade’s understanding of the *illud tempus* of creation and the nature of circular sacred time. When *homo religiosus* in Hinduism participates in a ritual, festival or other act that relates directly to the origin of the origin of the universe---in other words, *Brahman* from the mythical time of first creation—they experience circular sacred time. They are mentally present and living that time of sacred creation. The outer sacrifice of the pre-classical period transitions into the inner sacrifice of self (ego) in meditation and of rites and festivals. Thus with inner sacrifice ritual sacrifice is not needed in order for a person to engage in the experience of sacred

⁴⁸ *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*. III.xix.1.

⁴⁹ *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*. VI.xiii.1-3.

time. As I will show in chapter four, this experience of *Brahman*, differs significantly from the experience of sacred events that took place in prone history which establishes linear sacred time.

3.4.2 Circular Sacred Time in the Classical Period

Moving forward in history, we encounter the classical period in Hinduism, which covers approximately 500 BCE – 200 CE, although there is some debate in the literature as to the exact dates of this period. Here it should be noted that because the *Upaniṣads* were not all authored during the pre-classical period, this section also contains references to portions of the later *Upaniṣads* that were written during the classical period. This becomes a critical period for my analysis of the phenomenology of sacred time in Hinduism, as this period includes some sacred texts that contain instances of circular sacred time, and other texts that describe the experience of linear sacred time. In this section, I focus particularly on later *Upaniṣads* that contain instances of circular sacred time, as well as a section from the *Mahābhārata*. In chapter four, I will address texts from this period that support linear sacred time in Hinduism, particularly the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Rāmāyaṇa*.

The later *Upaniṣads* contain examples of circular sacred time in the classical period. In these *Upaniṣads*, the concept of differentiated and undifferentiated *Brahman* is formally articulated and emphasized. These texts are often considered the most philosophical portion of the *Vedas* and are used extensively in Vedānta, which I will

discuss in a later chapter on the post-classical period. Here there is a significant shift from the focus on individual deities found in the early *R̥g Veda* to consideration of *Brahman* and *ātman*. Recall that *Brahman* is the divine, immutable, infinite, and is the source of all being. It is from *Brahman* that all other things, whether they are material or immaterial, individual *ātman* or divine beings derive.

While two categories of *Brahman* are referred to in the *Vedas*, it is in the *Upaniṣads* where ideas of *nirguna Brahman* and *saguna Brahman* are formalized. *Nirguna Brahman* is *Brahman* undifferentiated, or “without attributes.” This is *Brahman* in its most fundamental and pure form. As *Brahman* without attributes, *nirguna Brahman* is considered to be incomprehensible to the human mind and beyond description. It is *Brahman* without qualities and as such represents *Brahman* at the time of origins. In contrast, *saguna Brahman* is *Brahman* with attributes or qualities. *Brahman* has become differentiated. All phenomena including physical objects, time, space, souls, and gods fall into the category of *saguna Brahman* for once something is created, *Brahman* always remains the essence of that thing. One might think of *saguna Brahman* as *Brahman* manifested as the phenomenal world and as entities that exist in the phenomenal world. In some instances, *nirguna Brahman* is described as *para Brahman*, (higher *Brahman*), or absolute *Brahman* and *Saguna Brahman* is sometimes referred to as *apara Brahman* (lower *Brahman*) in the *Advaita Vedānta* school of Hinduism.⁵⁰ As Rambachan notes, “there is no distinction between substance and

⁵⁰ Rambachan, Anantanand. "Hierarchies in the Nature of God? Questioning the "Saguna-Nirguna Distinction in Advaita Vedanta." *Journal of Hindu-Christian Studies*, vol. 14, no. 7, 2001, pp. 13-18. 13.

attributes (*gunas*) in *nirguna Brahman*, *saguna brahman* possesses attributes and there exists a distinction of substance and attributes.”⁵¹ All of this is of interest to a discussion of the circularity of sacred time since the timelessness represented by undifferentiated *Brahman* is equivalent to Eliade’s definition of the type of time experienced in circular sacred time. In sharp contrast to this, *saguna Brahman* includes avatars such as Krishna and Rama, who will later be discussed in connection to linear sacred time. As Eliade noted in “Time and Eternity in Indian Thought,” “Time and eternity are the two aspects of the same principle: in *Brahman*, the *nunc fluens* and the *nunc stans* (a term by which Boethius defined eternity) coincide.”⁵² Eternity is beyond time and *nirguna Brahman* is the origin of the origin of creation – it exists outside of time. Temporality and history are established as *saguna Brahman*.

Mohanty was particularly helpful in drawing attention to the one of the principle later *Upaniṣads*, the *Maitri Upaniṣad*, which describes the relationship of time to *Brahman*. Consider the following passage, that serves as an excellent example of circular sacred time in the classical period.

⁵¹ Ibid. 16.

⁵² Eliade, Mircea. "Time and Eternity in Indian Thought." *Man and Time: papers from the Eranos Yearbooks*, translated by Ralph Manheim, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951. 186.

Whoever reverences Time as Brahma,⁵³ from him time withdraws afar.

For thus has it been said: —

From Time flow forth created things.

From Time, too, they advance to growth.

In Time, too, they do disappear.

Time is a form and formless too.⁵⁴

Here there is an emphasis on the argument that I discussed earlier from the *Atharva Veda* in that that time precedes the creation of the phenomenal world as it is itself without physical form. Time exists on two distinct levels – time as eternal and unchanging as opposed profane time. We have on the higher-level the circular sacred time of the eternal – time that is part of the *illud tempus*; and then on the other level, we have profane time that is fundamentally linked to history, tenses, and the material world. Section 15 of the *Maitri Upaniṣad* then continues:

There are, assuredly, two forms of Brahma: Time and the Timeless. That which is prior to the sun is the Timeless (*a-kāla*), without parts (*a-kala*). But that which begins with the sun is Time, which has parts. Verily, the form of that which has parts is the year. From the year, in truth, are these creatures produced. Through the year, verily, after having been produced, do they grow. In the year they disappear. Therefore, the year,

⁵³ Brahma is a deity who is a manifestation of *Brahman* that is the force behind the creation of the universe. Radhakrishnan and Moore noted that they considered the use of “Brahma” in the above passage to be a mistranslation and that “Brahma” should be *Brahmin*. I have left the translation as published for the sake of consistency.

⁵⁴ *Maitri Upaniṣad*. 14.

verily, is Prajāpati, is Time, is food, is the Brahma-abode, and is *ātman*.

For thus has it been said: —

'Tis Time that cooks created things,

All things, indeed, in the Great Soul (*mahātman*).

In what, however, Time is cooked—

Who knows that, he the Veda knows!⁵⁵

Here, two different kinds of time are in play. Undifferentiated, “without parts” *Brahman*” is called “timeless” while differentiated, “with parts” is called “Time.” The reference to time as “cooking” is particularly interesting, for it indicates the desirability of knowledge of these two states of time. For the person who can recognize Time (i.e. profane time) and who realizes that said time is the source of existence for the phenomenal world will have true knowledge. For Eliade, sacred time is not only indicated by its circularity or eternal return to the time of creation, but it also provides “the foundation for the profane time of nature and history. From this perspective, profane time, despite its linear character, experiences the eruption of the cyclic, ever-returning sacred time.”⁵⁶ When individuals gain knowledge of time as a cause of existence, “’Tis Time that cooks created things,” they come to realize that both the profane time associated with the material world exists, and so does another kind of “Timelessness” which is circular sacred time, or the time of origins. Being able to engage in an intentional experience of circular sacred time through rites, festivals,

⁵⁵ *Maitri Upaniṣad*. 15.

⁵⁶ Mohanty, Jitendra Nath. *Reason and Tradition in Indian Thought: An Essay on the Nature of Indian Philosophical Thinking*. Clarendon Press, 1993. 187.

meditation or other religious practices, enables the religious person to literally participate in the moment in which time itself comes into existence. For Eliade, leads to greater authenticity for the individual as they recognize the homogeneity of the sacred act in which they are participating. They experience the *hierophany*.

Panikkar provided an excellent summation of the overall view of time in Hinduism's pre-classical period when he wrote, "Time is almost never considered in itself, but almost always as the dimension of expansion, that is of 'temporality' of beings."⁵⁷ It is through time that *Brahman* becomes manifest and exists with attributes. Circular sacred time is a fracture of profane time that allows the individual to experience the time of the sacred – the time of creation and the source of being in the world. As the *Maitri Upaniṣad* has shown us, this is exactly what is happening when we find *nirguna Brahman* becoming differentiated into *saguna Brahman*. A *hierophany* can take place when a religious person in Hinduism is able intentionally "see" through the veils of *saguna Brahman* and intentionally experience the sacred time of creation.

Eliade wrote that in an archaic religion "man conceives of himself as a microcosm. ... he finds in himself the same sanctity that he recognizes in the cosmos. ... the cosmos becomes the paradigmatic image of human existence."⁵⁸ Therefore, for Eliade, in archaic religions an individual can recognize that he himself is part of the sacred, and there is a duality where he is both a person living in profane time and yet

⁵⁷ Panikkar, Raimundo. "Toward a Typology of Time and Temporality in the Ancient Indian Tradition." *Philosophy East and West*, vol. 24, no. 2, 1974, pp. 161-164. 161.

⁵⁸Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1957. 165.

part of the sacred itself. This discovery of an “ultimate reality” about oneself leads to a more authentic existence than an individual who is focused on history and not experiencing the *illud tempus* via circular sacred time.

Moving on, consider the following passages from chapter twelve of the *Mahābhārata*. While on the surface, these passages appear to be an explanation for the process through which material objects are created, exist and then cease to exist in a profane temporal world, they are in fact quite relevant to sacred time since the sacred in Hinduism is linked with the nature of being.⁵⁹ Here in the first passage, 3, Narada is asking questions about the origin of the universe, and in the following passages, 4-9, Asita is responding to those questions:

3. Narada: From what was this universe created, with stationary and beings? And to whom do they go at dissolution? That tells me Sir.
4. Asita: From which Time, impelled by (his own) nature, creates being that those who think about beginnings say were the five gross elements.
5. From them Time, impelled by his own self, creates beings. One who should say that it was something other (or, higher) than these would be saying an untruth, there is known doubt.
6. Know that these five are eternal immovable unchanging; they are aggregates of great energy by their very nature, with Time as sixth.

⁵⁹ Here “being” refers to general existence and the creation of phenomena in the universe, both material objects, and non-material and should not be read as related to the Being/being distinction Martin Heidegger utilized.

10. These five and Time, and the simple coming into being and passing away are the eight eternal elements of beings, their origin and dissolution.⁶⁰

According to this passage, there are eight eternal and static elements. Five of these are the material, or gross elements (ether, wind, fire, water, earth) and the others are creation, dissolution, and time. Not all of these, however, come into being simultaneous with one another. Time serves as the catalyst for the coming into being of the five material gross elements. Time is a fundamental part of creation, and the existence of time preceded the creation of the other gross elements. It is then, the nature of time to “create the being” of the subsequent elements. Time causes the formative maturity or development of all other beings. Following this line of reasoning, we might ask what then caused the existence or creation of time? “Time matures all beings by itself. But no one here on earth knows him in which Time is matured.”⁶¹ Beyond being the cause that prompts the creation of the five gross elements, time itself remains a part of them once created. “These five and Time, and the simple coming into being and passing away are the eight eternal elements of beings.”⁶² These elements come into being and go out of being in linear profane time.

How then is this relevant to sacred time? Upon first reading, it might seem that these passages serve as an explanation for the creation and existence of profane time

⁶⁰ Edgerton, Franklin. *The Beginnings of Indian Philosophy*. Harvard University Press, 1965. *Mahābhārata*. 12.267-3-6, 10.

⁶¹ *ibid.* *Mahābhārata* 12.231.25.

⁶² *ibid.* *Mahābhārata*. 12.267.10.

along with the place of material objects or gross matter within a temporal framework. However, there is a significant connection to circular sacred time in the above passage. As Panikkar wrote regarding time in Indian philosophy “the nature of time could be formulated by saying that time is lived or experienced as the ontological temperature of being, that is, as that which manifests the activity of every being, and consequently also its existence as intelligible and its degree of reality be it provisional or ultimate.”⁶³

Clearly, time is fundamentally linked with being. As these passages illustrate, time is the cause of the existence of being in the five gross elements and those elements when existent exist in time. Sacred time becomes relevant in this case because the “him in which time is matured” is *Brahman* otherwise known as the ultimate reality or the sacred as identified in the *Upaniṣads*. Therefore, this clearly links to the sacred. The source of being itself is the sacred; it is *Brahman* or undifferentiated being. This attitude toward the link between being and time and the sacred is quite in keeping with Eliade’s stance that although objects and people do exist in profane time, sacred time is a more fundamental and authentic type of time. Therefore, it is arguable that *Brahman* itself can be representative of Eliade’s conception of circular sacred time. This is because *Brahman* is that which exists outside of profane time and is that which causes profane time to come into existence. *Brahman* is ultimately the sacred itself. While the phenomenal world (with its dependent existence upon time) is in a sense “real,” clearly its reality is dependent on the ultimate fundamental reality of *Brahman*. When

⁶³ Panikkar, Raimundo. "Toward a Typology of Time and Temporality in the Ancient Indian Tradition." *Philosophy East and West*, vol. 24, no. 2, 1974, pp. 161-164. 161.

participating in the temporal world, human beings are bound to the profane. It is only when individuals (via participating in rites, festivals, meditation, prayer, and so on.) break free from profane through the *hierophany* that they can participate in the fundamental reality of *Brahman*. In other words, they participate in the sacred and in sacred time. Panikkar wrote that “The circularity of time does not imply that it is infinite but exactly the opposite, that it is contingent and limited, that it is closed, and hence in order to achieve or reach reality, one must shatter it, transcend it, escape from its grasp, break the cycle.”⁶⁴ In Hinduism, it is through the transcendence of the temporally bound phenomenal reality of *māyā* that an individual gains access to sacred time in Hinduism. This is in keeping with Eliade’s basic conception of circular sacred time in Hinduism as I discussed in chapter two.

3.4.3 Circular Sacred Time in the Post-Classical Period

At this point, I would like to turn to a school of thought in Hinduism that Eliade never systematically addressed - the Vedānta school, and in particular the subset of Advaita Vedānta. Vedānta is the most recently developed of the six orthodox schools of Hinduism, formalized approximately during the eighth century CE. Overall, the initial focus in *Vedānta* centers around the link between *ātman* and the divine *Brahman*. As a whole, this school draws much of its theory from the *Upaniṣads* and their particular commentary on the *Vedas* along with the *Bhagavad-gītā*, where meditation and paths

⁶⁴ Ibid. 162.

to personal liberation from *māyā* are emphasized. In particular, I will focus on the structures and experiences of sacred time found in the *ātman-Brahman* link, the cycle of reincarnation and realization of *moksha* otherwise known as liberation.

In order to better understand the role of sacred time in Vedānta, it will be helpful first to explain Vedānta's conception of *Brahman* and the creation of the phenomenal world. As I noted in earlier in this chapter, the misconception that Hinduism does not acknowledge the existence of the phenomenal world, terming it "illusion," stemmed from the Vedānta system as it emphasizes the desirability of the self's liberation from the phenomenal world of *māyā*. The most fundamental basis of the phenomenal world, according to Vedānta, is *Brahman*.

Earlier, I discussed *Upaniṣads* from the classical period that elaborated on *Brahman* as differentiated (*śaguna Brahman*) and undifferentiated (*nirguna Brahman*). Vedānta embraces and expands upon this conception of *Brahman*. Take for example the creation of the phenomenal world, *māyā*:

Correctly speaking, then, for the *Advaita Vedāntin* reality is that which exists without depending on anything other than itself for its existence. In this sense, only *Brahman* is the reality while the phenomenal world, being dependent on *Brahman*, is not ultimate ... there can be no such thing as a pure illusion – every illusion is grounded in reality.⁶⁵

One can almost think of the creation of the phenomenal world as part of a hierarchy of being. *Nirguna Brahman* exists prior to the existence of anything else; it is *Brahman* in

⁶⁵ Puligandla, R. "Time and History in the Indian Tradition." Ibid.pp. 165-170. 165-166.

its purest and undifferentiated form. It is here important to note that causality for creation is not attributed to *Brahman*. “*Nirguna* affirms the uniqueness of *brahman*’s nature, but does not speak of the possibility of *brahman* as world creator.”⁶⁶ *Nirguna Brahman* becomes differentiated into *saguna Brahman*, and this includes the formation of profane historical time. Time then causes the existence of the gross elements and thereby the creation of the phenomenal world. The reality of the phenomenal world is entirely dependent upon the reality of *Brahman*. It is from this that the view of *māyā* as illusion is produced. It is far from true that the phenomenal world lacks reality; in actually it lacks independent reality, as it is dependent upon the reality of *nirguna Brahman*. As Puligandla noted, “time has no reality of *its own*; and since time is of the essence of the phenomenal world, the latter, too, viewed from the higher standpoint has no reality of *its own* ... time is a secondary, dependent reality with no ultimate ontological status.”⁶⁷ To be part of the phenomenal world is to be bound in profane time. The fundamental relationship between the phenomenal world and *Brahman* must be recognized for they are not two separate things, but a single non-dualistic reality. In short, *Brahman* is *Brahman*. While it can be differentiated into parts, at the core, *Brahman* is a single reality. The true, sacred nature of *Brahman* undifferentiated is concealed by the overlay of *māyā* that includes profane time. It is only when *homo religiosus* experiences the *hierophany* and enters into the experience of sacred time that

⁶⁶ Rambachan, Anantanand. "Hierarchies in the Nature of God? Questioning the "Saguna-Nirguna Distinction in Advaita Vedanta." *Journal of Hindu-Christian Studies*, vol. 14, no. 7, 2001, pp. 13-18. 14.

⁶⁷ Puligandla, R. "Time and History in the Indian Tradition." *Philosophy East and West*, vol. 24, no. 2, 1974, pp. 165-170. 168-169.

they can gain some understanding of *Brahman* undifferentiated. Here I should note that in *Advaita Vedānta*, an individual only gains a true understanding of *Brahman* when he has attained *moksha*. The exact methods employed by an individual to attain this enlightenment are not important here; what matters is that the individual who experiences the *hierophany* is able to experience a hint of *Brahman's* true nature through the *hierophany* and sacred time, but this is not sufficient have a full understanding of *Brahman*.

What then is the purpose of discussing the creation of the world – for it seems that the time involved in the creation of the material world is a profane time – the time of tenses and history (and thereby linear time)? It is clearly the case that a profane time linked to space and the material world is one differentiated aspect of *Brahman*, yet there is also a time of the eternal which is timeless, *saguna Brahman*. I believe that this is analogous to Eliade's conception of the circularity of sacred time. As I showed in chapter two, it would be a mistake to assume that for Eliade the use of the term circular can be equated with the geometric shape of a circle that has a starting point and an end point before starting over again. The circularity of sacred time for Eliade refers to what others might term eternity – or that which is in a sense atemporal or outside of time:

It is only through knowledge that transcends everything that is characteristic of existence in time and which provides the insight into the ground of time-bound existence that man can conquer suffering, fear of death and death itself, and thereby attain immortality. That is, it is knowledge of the eternal ground and basis of phenomenal, temporal

existence that emancipates man from fetters and shackles of time. To put it differently, man overcomes the pain and suffering of time-bound existence by the knowledge of the eternal and timeless.⁶⁸

Participation in sacred time in Hinduism is participation in the eternal, a glimpse one might say of reality that is not bound by time – it is a conscious transition from profane time and into a glimpse of the truth of *Brahman*. The illusion of *māyā* is not merely that of the physical world, but also an illusion of profane time. When individuals participate in a religious experience that allows them access to the sacred, they transcend profane time and experience the time of origins that is circular sacred time. There is an important distinction between the mythical time of origins as the creation of the universe and *nirguna Brahman*. *Brahman*, before differentiation as *saguna Brahman*, exists as eternal and without time. It simply is. At the time of creation, when the universe comes into existence, *Brahman* becomes differentiated and time comes into existence. Time is then part of *saguna Brahman*. In order for a person to access the eternal *nirguna Brahman*, he must do so through the medium of *saguna Brahman*. This exemplifies Eliade's point that the *hierophany* takes place through the *coincidentia oppositorum*, that paradoxically we need the profane in order to reveal the sacred. Because *Brahman* itself is eternal and timeless the best approximation of the sacred that humans can experience is through *saguna Brahman*. To reveal *nirguna Brahman* is to experience the origin of the time of origins – the source of creation itself.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 248.

How then does this link between the sacred time of *Brahman* and profane time of *māyā* play out in the experience of an individual person? Although Eliade was not particularly interested in reincarnation, I feel that it is quite relevant to the experience of sacred time. Eliade wrote that the *karmic* cycle “signified indefinite prolongation of suffering and slavery ... the only hope was nonreturn-to-existence, the abolition of *karma*; in other words, final deliverance (*moksha*), implying a transcendence of the cosmos.”⁶⁹ Eliade regarded this as a worrisome de-emphasis on the value of experience. Instead of seeking the experience of sacred time through practices in daily life, he thought that the *karmic* cycle encouraged a fundamentally negative view of the experiences found in *māyā*. For Eliade, an emphasis on attaining *moksha* meant that Advaita Vedāntin theories would lead a person to focus only on the removal of his *karmic* debt through *dharma* (duty) and that the individual would then ignore the value of authenticity attained through the *hierophany*. The person would not participate in valuable circular sacred time, instead focusing on things that occurred in the linear history of profane time as he sought to negate his *karmic* burden. Eliade even went so far as to argue that the *karmic* cycle is a construction by the “religious and philosophical elites who felt despair in the presence of cyclic time repeating itself *ad infinitum*.”⁷⁰ He regarded the *karmic* cycle as entrenching individuals in homologized profane time and encouraging them to disregard circular sacred time that returns them to the time of origins. Eliade, with this view of *karma*, missed the mark. The focus with *karma* and

⁶⁹ Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1957. 109.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 109.

dharma is not on merely attaining a superior rebirth in order to attain a more enjoyable or easy next life on earth. The focus is on the origin of the origin of time – on *nirguna Brahman* and the experience of the sacred mythical time of creation.

Eliade's dismay over the influence of the *karmic* cycle seemed to be a broad generalization about the dangers that *karma* has for the entirety of Hinduism. While different schools may have divergent views on the role of the *karmic* cycle, I can point to at one clear example where Eliade was mistaken about the role of *karma* in Hinduism. Advaita Vedānta does not view *ātman's* experience the physical world as something to be liberated from but embraces it. Recognition of the fundamental nonduality of *ātman* and *Brahman* is emphasized in Advaita Vedānta with its non-duality position; but such recognition takes place in *māyā* and is therefore not something to be escaped from, but embraced. To attain *moksha*, a person must seek a profound understanding of the sacred through religious experience (such as festivals, rites, and meditation) and attain an understanding of the *ātman-Brahman* connection. The fundamental feature of circular sacred time in Hinduism is that *nirguna Brahman*, as eternal and timeless existed without parts. Thus, Advaita Vedānta does not de-emphasize the value of experiencing the sacred but regards it an essential component of attaining *moksha*. The discovery of the nonduality that is a person's true self, *ātman*, requires the experience of sacred time.

Advaita Vedānta does emphasize personal liberation from the phenomenal world and recognition of the nonduality of *ātman* with *Brahman*. This is accomplished through becoming what Eliade would have termed the *homo religiosus*. Thus it is not

fair for Eliade to disregard the Advaita Vedānta school when he analyzed sacred time in Hinduism. The *ātman* is trapped within the limited perspective of *māyā* and profane time. *Ātman* may go through a succession of joining with different physical bodies, and based on actions performed during those incarnations either accrues new *karmic* debt or works toward said debt's dissolution. Initially, a person is ignorant of its *ātman's* connection to *Brahman*. Throughout successive lifetimes, the person then can gain knowledge of the *ātman-Brahman* unity and thereby move towards the attainment of *moksha*. Knowledge is the means by which an individual is able to transcend temporality in totally and attain *moksha* (and thereby freedom from the cycle of *karma*, *dharma*, and reincarnation): "... it is knowledge of the eternal ground and basis of phenomenal, temporal existence that emancipates man from the fetters and shackles of time. In short, man overcomes the pain and suffering of temporality by the knowledge of the eternal and timeless."⁷¹ Through the kinds of practices emphasized by Eliade (rituals, festivals and the like), the person is able to experience glimpses of sacred time, the time or origins and original creation derived from *Brahman*. Here, the individual is utilizing knowledge gained about the *karmic* cycle to enable further a connection the time of origins. "*Brahman* is the timeless and eternal ground of all existence; accordingly, it is the knowledge of *Brahman* which liberates man from the grip of time."⁷² This is the crux of Eliade's claim that the experience of circular sacred time is both a more authentic and valuable mode of experience because it enables the religious

⁷¹ Puligandla, R. "Time and History in the Indian Tradition." *Philosophy East and West*, vol. 24, no. 2, 1974, pp. 165-170. 168.

⁷² *Ibid.* 248.

person to experience the time of creation. During the life and experiences of incarnation in a physical body in *māyā* “Religious man periodically finds his way into mythical and sacred time, re-enters the *time of origin*, the time that “floweth not” because it does not participate in profane temporal duration, because it is composed of an *eternal present*, which is indefinitely recoverable.”⁷³ The process of seeking freedom from reincarnation is the process of seeking the experience of sacred time.

Now to move outside of Vedānta, consider the *Brahmavaivarta Purāna*. This *purāna* dates approximately to the 15th or possibly the 16th century. A version of it may have been established earlier, but as the text Eliade referenced was formalized in the 15th-16th century, I have included it in the post-classical period. Eliade briefly discussed this small section of the *Brahmakaivarta Purāna* in *Images and Symbols* and outlined the story in greater detail in “Time and Reality in Indian Thought.”⁷⁴ Broadly speaking, this *purāna* includes a story about the god Indra instructing the “divine artificer” Visvakarman to rebuild the palace of the gods and make it more magnificent than the previous palace. In the end, Visvakarman, who is being ill-treated by Indra, eventually talks with the god Vishnu⁷⁵ and Vishnu chooses to intercede with Indra on Visvakarman’s behalf. Vishnu adopts the disguise of a boy and visits Indra. During this visit, Vishnu takes Indra down several pegs by explaining that many iterations of Indra have existed, and many more will come to exist. Indra comes to recognize that he has

⁷³ Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1957. 88.

⁷⁴ ---. "Time and Eternity in Indian Thought." *Man and Time: papers from the Eranos Yearbooks*, translated by Ralph Manheim, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951. 75-77.

⁷⁵ Note that Viṣṇu is the diacritical spelling of Vishnu. I utilize Viṣṇu, unless the original author of a quotation utilized Vishnu.

been overly prideful and arrogant in his aspirations for the greatness of the place.⁷⁶ Now for Eliade, this tale is a myth and the lesson it teaches connects the listener to an experience of sacred time and helps the listener to understand the “true story of the eternal creation and destruction of worlds ...”⁷⁷ and the lack of meaning in the homogeneity of everyday profane time and life. For Eliade, while this story does not take place in the time of origins, it would take place in what Eliade termed an “age of gold.” Eliade introduced this concept of an “age of gold” in *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*. This period is not actually part of the time of creation, but closely adjacent to it and as such is recoverable through circular sacred time. The sacred rites or actions that connect the participating individual back to the “age of gold” serve to establish the experience of circular sacred time. The eternal return to the time of creation is accessible via this “age of gold.”⁷⁸ The “age of gold” is characterized by existing in an age of gods or celestial beings, and is described as being a paradise, utopia wherein life is idealized, and there is no strife, conflict or other problems.⁷⁹ For example, Eliade characterized celestial cities which serve as the model for modern royal cities in India as existing in the “age of gold.”⁸⁰ Here I agree with Eliade and support that this particular story is exemplary of myth that enables a listener, or reciter to consciously experience circular sacred time. It would seem, given that the portion of the

⁷⁶ Eliade tells this story in detail in Eliade, Mircea. *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism*. translated by Philip Mairet, Harvill Press, 1961. 60-62.

⁷⁷ Ibid. 62.

⁷⁸ ---. *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper & Brothers, 1954. 112-113.

⁷⁹ ---. *Myth and Reality*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper & Row, 1963. 198.

⁸⁰ ---. *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper & Brothers, 1954. 9.

Brahmakāvarta Purāna that Eliade discussed events in a celestial city that might serve as an example of an “age of gold” and thus representative of circular sacred time. Later on, in chapter five, when I address possible objections to my theory of linear sacred time in Hinduism I will briefly return to the “age of gold” concept to argue that the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Rāmāyaṇa* do not qualify as examples of the “age of gold” and instead serve as examples of linear sacred time, and enable religious persons to access linear sacred time through interactions with these works.

As undifferentiated *Brahman*, *nirguna Brahman* is formless and eternal. It exists prior to the creation of the phenomenal world and time. When *Brahman* becomes differentiated as *saguna Brahman* time, the gods, the mythical time of creation, the “age of gold,” the material world, *ātman*, and all of the other *gunas*, or “qualities” come into existence. *Nirguna Brahman* is formless. In some interpretations of Advaita Vedānta, the experience of the sacred eternal *nirguna Brahman* requires the negation of *saguna Brahman*. So in order to experience circular sacred time that is *nirguna Brahman*, one must engage in the *coincidentia oppositorum* to consciously transcend the profane world and profane time that is *saguna Brahman*.

The type of *Brahman* that a person experiences is one of the keys to distinguishing between the experience of circular sacred time and that of linear sacred time in Hinduism. As I will show in chapter four, when individuals in Hinduism experience linear sacred time, they are experiencing the sacred directly as it is found in *saguna Brahman*. Given that *saguna Brahman* is part of all things, when a person interacts with an avatar in profane time, or participates in ritual that recalls the

historical time in which an avatar intervened in the profane world, he is experiencing the sacred. However, since it is not the sacred eternal origin of the origin of time that is *nirguna Brahman* this person is not experiencing circular sacred time. Instead, he experiences the sacred through the medium of profane history in the same way that a religious person in a “modern” religion experiences sacred time.

3.5 Chapter Three Summary and Preview of Chapter Four

In section 3.2 of this chapter, I began with a discussion of profane time in Hinduism in order to clarify the types of references to time which are not relevant to a discussion of sacred time and then I proceeded to discuss the role of sacred time in the history of Hinduism. I noted that, as was shown in the first chapter, a mention of time in religion does not necessitate that said time is *sacred* time. Profane time plays a role in any religion – as evidenced in Hinduism through a discussion of the misconception that Hinduism as a whole has only cycles of time. This would be impossible given that while there certainly are cycles of time within Hinduism, the religion recognizes a linear progression of history, especially in the sense that one cycle is after another.

Then, in section 3.3, I presented Eliade’s discussion of sacred time as being circular in Hinduism. I find that Eliade was correct to say that circular sacred time exists in Hinduism. However, in chapter 4 I will prove that linear sacred time is also present in Hinduism and therefore Eliade’s understanding of sacred time in Hinduism was

incomplete. I contend that linear sacred time is also present and I will elaborate on this in chapter four.

In section 3.4 of the chapter, I addressed the role of sacred time throughout the history of Hinduism. In doing so, I concentrated primarily on three key historical eras, the pre-classical period, the classical period and the post-classical period. I discussed key passages from the *Vedas* and *Upaniṣads*, which reflect on *Brahman* as timeless and eternal when undifferentiated and illustrate circular sacred time in Hinduism. Moving forward I addressed the classical period but noted that this period relates more to linear time in Hinduism and will be further dealt with in the next chapter.

Lastly, I detailed sacred time in the post-classical period, centering my discussion on the Orthodox Advaita Vedānta school that has largely become the dominant school of Hindu thought. In Advaita Vedānta, there is a detailed discussion of the connection between *Brahman* and *ātman*. In this conception of circular sacred time, Eliade emphasized that the experience of sacred time was the experience of something more authentic and pure than that of profane time. The experience of sacred time involves stepping beyond profane time and becoming contemporary with the origin of creation and the divine. Eliade believed that profane time serves to conceal the authentic mode of being found in an experience of sacred time. This, I think is exemplified in the relationship between *ātman* and *Brahman* wherein *Brahman* is essentially the circular sacred time which Eliade so emphasized and the *ātman*, while trapped in profane time, is the inner source of experience in the small self (*jīva*) and is that which seeks to attain liberation from profane time. *Atman* experiences these “irruptions” of sacred time and

when finally, free from *māyā* participates fully in circular sacred time alone when it merges seamlessly back into undifferentiated *nirguna Brahman*. In short, this chapter offers evidence to support Eliade's view that circular sacred time exists in Hinduism.

Next, in chapter four I will explore Eliade's view that linear sacred time exists in Christianity and Judaism, and why he believed that Hinduism and other archaic religions cannot participate in linear sacred time. Eliade claimed that all sacred time is circular in Hinduism, but this fails to account for the experience of sacred time that takes place in history when a person experiences the sacred directly *as saguna Brahman* without moving beyond into eternal time of creation. I find that the experience of linear sacred time in Hinduism parallels the same type of linear sacred time that Eliade associated with Christianity and Judaism. I will examine primary sacred texts of Hinduism which support my primary thesis of the existence of linear sacred time and circular sacred time coexisting in Hinduism.

CHAPTER 4. LINEAR SACRED TIME IN HINDUISM

4.1 Introduction

In the third chapter of this work, I explored Eliade's conception of sacred time as fundamentally limited to circular sacred time in Hinduism. I began with a presentation of Eliade's understanding of the circular nature of sacred time in archaic religions such as Hinduism and then indicated that there is ample evidence of circular sacred time in Hinduism. In the fourth chapter, I will present Eliade's understanding of linear sacred time, which he attributes to non-archaic religions and then provide case examples proving that linear sacred time does actually exist within archaic religions as exemplified by Hinduism. While Eliade was correct to present examples of sacred time in Hinduism as circular, I contend that not all sacred time is of that type and that Eliade failed to understand that there are significant elements of linear sacred time in Hinduism. However, I believe that there are many examples in Hinduism that Eliade disregarded which offer multiple instances where linear sacred time is present in Hinduism.

The majority of these examples are from classical period, particularly in two texts, the *Bhagavad-gītā* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Through these examples, I will claim

that linear sacred time in Hinduism functions in much the same way that linear sacred time functions in Eliade's examples of from Judaism and Christianity. When combined with the evidence of circular sacred time in Hinduism discussed in chapter 3, this proves that religious individuals in Hinduism can experience both linear sacred time and circular sacred time.

I will begin this chapter by presenting Eliade's understanding of what I have termed linear sacred time, and then provide a critique of his viewpoint that linear sacred time does not exist in Hinduism. To do this, I will analyze sacred texts from Hinduism that provide support for my thesis. In section 4.3.1, I will draw on examples of linear sacred time from the *Vedas* and early *Upaniṣads* and then in section 4.3.2, I give an in-depth analysis of linear sacred time connected to avatars using the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Rāmāyaṇa*. Lastly, in this chapter, I will use those same two sacred epics to explore the concept of *bhakti*, (devotion) and I will show that through *bhakti* religious persons can experience linear sacred time in Hinduism.

4.2 Eliade's Conception of Sacred Time in Christianity and Judaism

To begin, recall that Eliade regarded sacred time as a type of time where the individual, through ritual, festival or similar practice, becomes present now when the original sacred event occurred in profane historical time. In circular sacred time, the consciousness of the individual circles back to participate in the original mythical time of creation, such that the mythical time is made present to the individual's consciousness

through his participation in the ritual. As Eliade himself indicated, “modern” religions such as Christianity and Judaism do not participate in circular sacred time because they directly link the sacred to events in profane linear history. Therefore, the type of sacred time experienced by *homo religiosus* in such religions valorizes a historically grounded form of the sacred. For clarity, I have termed this kind of sacred time “linear sacred time” to more clearly differentiate it from circular sacred time.

To explain how linear sacred time comes into existence and how it functions, Eliade examined sacred time in Christianity and Judaism. He argued that these religions do something new, which is to create a “*theology of history*” wherein cyclical time is abandoned entirely for both profane and sacred linear time. For instance, Eliade made the following statement about Judaism:

For Judaism, time has a beginning and will have an end. The idea of cyclic time is left behind. Yahweh [God] no longer manifests himself in *cosmic time* (like the gods of other religions) but in a *historical time*, which is irreversible. Each new manifestation of Yahweh in history is no longer reducible to an earlier manifestation ... His gestures are *personal* interventions in history and reveal their deep meaning *only for his people*, the people that Yahweh has *chosen*. Hence the historical event acquires a new dimension; it becomes a *theophany*.¹

¹ ---. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1957. 110-111.

While I cannot disagree with Eliade's argument that there is a clear focus on historical events in Judaism (and Christianity as well), here Eliade made an even broader argument that these two religions represent a shift in religious thought away from archaic religions. He described a different type of sacred time – that of the *theophany* and claimed that it is only in these non-archaic religions that the sacred becomes so deeply embedded in the events of profane history that what I have termed “linear sacred” time begins to exist and comes to prominence. I take issue with this on two counts: Firstly, Judaism is not the first world religion to have the type of *theophany* Eliade described. As I shall clearly illustrate in this chapter, both the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Rāmāyaṇa* in Hinduism make similar use of linear sacred time which matches the type of experience of the sacred Eliade described in the above passage. Thus, linear sacred time is present in Hinduism, well before it is established in Judaism. Secondly, while it is accurate for Eliade to claim “For Judaism, time has a beginning and will have an end,”²² such a view of time as having a beginning and an end is not unusual in archaic religions such as Hinduism. Hinduism has a significant focus on profane time that is not cyclical in nature. The *yugas* offer clear evidence that profane time itself is not seen as cyclical in Hinduism. The *yugas* were cycles but not circular sacred cycles. As I discussed earlier, each *yuga* and *mahayuga* is unique and proceeds from one to the next in a linear profane timeline. The contents of the events that occur in one *yuga* are not repeated in subsequent *yugas* in anything like a cycle. Time in one *yuga* is not in any way identical with time in another *yuga*. The complicating factor for Hinduism is that it exhibits both

²² *ibid.* 110-111.

profane time that is organized into cycles, for example, *yugas*, which are part of a linear profane history and the type of linear, historically grounded linear sacred time that Eliade discussed in relation to Judaism and Christianity. Eliade understood Hinduism inaccurately when he argued that “modern” religions are the first to utilize linear sacred time.

Before entering deeply into my argument that Hinduism has linear sacred time, I will more closely examine Eliade’s basic understating of linear sacred time in Judaism and Christianity. At this point, it should be understood that profane time exists in Christianity and in Judaism just as it exists in Hinduism and in the world at large.³ As seen in the previously referenced passage by Eliade regarding Judaism, he regarded linear sacred time in Judaism as creating a new *theophany*. The deity interacts directly with the world and those interactions take place in history, or in other words in linear profane time. There is no longer a cyclical return to the one moment of God’s original wrath by those who experience God’s wrath at different moments in profane history. Instead, each instance of wrath is historically unique and does not directly connect the consciousness of the person having the experience back to the mythical origin of the universe. There is no longer an experience of circular sacred time such as in the fire altar from Hinduism where religious individuals access the eternal time of first creation. Instead, there is a clear progression from X, to Y to Z for both the religious person living

³ There are alternative theories of time which present arguments that even profane time does not exist or that it does not exist in a linear fashion. In this case, I continue to understand profane time as a linear and historical progression of events. For example, in Christianity, the birth of Jesus was prior to the Crusades in profane time.

in the world and for interactions that the deity has with the profane world and history. Eliade indicated that there is a similar linear sacred progression for Christianity where “Christianity arrives, not as a *philosophy* but as a *theology* of history. For God’s interventions in history, and above all his Incarnation in the historical person of Jesus Christ, have a transhistorical purpose—the *salvation* of man.”⁴ The events taking place within the realm of the sacred are progressing in the order that matches the linear progression of profane time. This is an inextricable link between the events in profane time and the events in sacred time. So according to Eliade, a religious person who interacts with the sacred in Judaism or Christianity can experience sacred time through a *theophany*, but it is a fundamentally different phenomenological experience than that which a person who is engaging in a *hierophany* experiences.

Consider the creation of the material world. Eliade also noted that the creation of the world in the Judaic and Christian traditions occurs only once. There is no cycle of the world being created and destroyed but simply “The End of the World.” “The Cosmos that will reappear after the catastrophe will be the same Cosmos that God created at the beginning of Time, but purified, regenerated and restored to its original glory.”⁵ According to Eliade, there is no myth of the Eternal Return to be found in the Judaic or Christian traditions. There is in fact, a return of sorts accessible to Christianity and Judaism but for Eliade it is to the *historical* time of creation and not to mythical time such as that evidenced by Hinduism. “The Judaeo-Christian Sabbath is also an *imitatio*

⁴ Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1957. 112.

⁵ ---. *Myth and Reality*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper & Row, 1963. 64-65.

dei. The Sabbath rest reproduces the primordial gesture of the Lord, for it was on the seventh day of the Creation that God "... rested ... from all his work which he had made" (Genesis 2: 2)."⁶ Here the Sabbath is an avenue of recognizing sacred time, but it recognizes a "day of the Creation" and not a mythical time. It recognizes events that took place at the beginning of profane time.

Continuing in this vein, Eliade wrote that:

This God of the Jewish people is no longer an Oriental divinity, creator of archetypal gestures, but a personality who ceaselessly intervenes in history, who reveals his will through events (invasions, sieges, battles, and so on). Historical facts thus become "situations" of man in respect to God, and as such they acquire a religious value that nothing had previously been able to confer on them.⁷

In particular, Eliade claimed that in Judaism (and by extension Christianity) God is no longer associated with "archetypal gestures" and that direct interventions with linear profane time take place through various historical events. History itself acquires religious and thereby sacred value. I argue that since no return to the mythical time of creation takes place, these sacred interactions between God and human history show a different type of sacred time – linear sacred time and the associated experience of the *theophany*.

⁶ ---. *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper & Brothers, 1954. 23.

⁷ *Ibid.* 104.

In *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*, Eliade further elaborated on the difference between the direct interventions by the divine in history that are not possible in circular sacred time. He noted that *hierophanies* were “produced in endless succession”⁸ such as dance, marriage, and ritual⁹ because these types of sacred events served as examples of “firsts” dating to the mythical time of creation. For “monotheistic revelation,”¹⁰ which occurs in Christianity and Judaism, a sacred event does not take place in a mythical time of creation, but in profane history:

Moses receives the Law at a certain place and at a certain date. Of course, here too archetypes are involved, in the sense that these events, raised to the rank of examples, will be repeated; but they will not be repeated until the times are accomplished, that is, in a new *illud tempus*.¹¹

Here, Eliade highlighted that the archetype involved in the example of Moses is not one of a deity and event that took place at the mythical time of creation. There is no opportunity to engage in the eternal return to the time of origins. Instead, a religious person who interacts with the history of Moses interacts with a different type of archetype – one grounded in linear sacred time. This is the key factor differentiating a *theophany* from a *hierophany*. The archetype of Moses is grounded in linear profane time, so then when *homo religiosus* intentionally interacts with this example through

⁸ Ibid. 105.

⁹ Ibid. 105.

¹⁰ Ibid. 105.

¹¹ Ibid. 105.

ritual, prayer or some other means, they experience linear sacred time, a return to a specific point in history.

Continuing his discussion of Moses, Eliade also pointed out that because the Moses example functions as a *theophany* “the future will regenerate time; that is, will restore its original purity and integrity. Thus, *in illo tempore* is situated not only at the beginning of time but also at its end.”¹² The *theophany* is directly connected to time but it is a type of sacred time that has a decisive beginning and is moving toward a decisive end. There is a religious moment of creation, but it is a historical origin instead of a mythical one. There is also a decisive end of profane time to take place at some point in the future. The idea of the world being regenerated in a cyclical fashion and the existence of an idealized mythical time of the gods and creation is no longer what individuals seek to experience via sacred time. Individuals instead seek to experience historical irruptions of the sacred via the *theophany*. Their intentionality is to become present at events where the sacred directly engaged in history and the profane world.

In one of his most explicit statements about the differences between circular sacred time and what I have termed linear sacred time, Eliade wrote that “History is thus abolished... [in the] the future. Periodic regeneration of the Creation is replaced by a single regeneration that will take place in an *in illo tempore* to come.”¹³ Continuing in this vein, Eliade argued that Christianity is even more deeply steeped in linear sacred time than Judaism:

¹² Ibid. 106.

¹³ Ibid. 111-112.

Since God was incarnated, that is, since he took on a *historically conditioned human existence*, history acquires the possibility of being sanctified. The *illud tempus* evoked by the Gospels is a clearly defined historical time ... but it was *sanctified by the presence of Christ*. When a Christian of our day participates in liturgical time, he recovers the *illud tempus* in which Christ lived, suffered, and rose again--but it is no longer a mythical time ... For the Christian, too, the sacred calendar indefinitely rehearses the same events of the existence of Christ--but these events took place in history; they are no longer facts that happened at the origin of time.¹⁴

In short, Eliade stated that the incarnation of Christ and Christ's interaction with humanity in profane historical time is a unique event. The events that took place during Christ's incarnation on earth are recollected through participation in the liturgy and annual festivals, rituals, and prayers that an individual could participate in within the framework of Christian religious belief. Note that Eliade used the word "rehearses." The person who is rehearsing such events is no longer returning to the moment at the beginning of creation as they would in circular sacred time. They are instead rehearsing or revisiting an event that took place historically in linear sacred time. History itself has become part of the sacred. Linear sacred time retains the sacred despite the fact that the sacred time no longer establishes a return to an original moment of creation.

¹⁴ ---. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1957. 111-112.

Instead, as Dupré noted, linear sacred time in Christianity functions differently, focusing on “a single chain of events – the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ ...

Christians have found meaning and consolation in the remembrance of Jesus’ life and passion while sacramental rituals have made this life contemporary with their own.”¹⁵

Here the comment about “made this life contemporary with their own”¹⁶ is of particular importance. The phenomenological experience of a person in linear sacred time participates in an event that took place in historical time, in this example the life and death of Christ, as within his own life. A sacred moment in linear history is made present to the individual who participates in a rite or festival in Christianity or Judaism.

With the *theophany* “Memory was, above all [for Christianity], the road to the inner center in which any encounter with God takes place. For that reason, *all* cognition of God had to be a *memoria Dei*.”¹⁷ Through an experience of linear sacred time, the individual can encounter the sacred. This is the primary function of sacred time and justifies that linear sacred time can be an access point for the sacred in the same way that circular sacred time can. The difference is in the type of sacred time experienced. In Christianity, it is linear sacred time because the sacred is directly linked to moments of profane linear history. Valk offered further insight into Eliade’s conception of sacred time in Christianity, pointing out that “For Christianity the Kingdom of God was not just a future possibility: it was also attainable at any moment ... accessible to anyone at any

¹⁵ Dupré, Louis. "Alienation and Redemption Through Time and Memory: an Essay on Religious Time Consciousness." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, vol. 43, no. 4, 1975, pp. 671-679. 677.

¹⁶ Ibid. 677.

¹⁷ Ibid. 677.

time through the *metanoia*.”¹⁸ This then produces “the complete concealing of the divine *in* history.”¹⁹ Because the divine is found within historical context, to access the divine in Christianity the *theophany* then means a person experiences the sacred through the medium of history. History is not abolished through the sacred as it is in circular sacred time, it is instead revisited in the *theophany*.

So if a religious person in Christianity is not able to access circular sacred time how does the *theophany* function in Christianity? It would seem that without circular sacred time the *illud tempus* is lost to a person within a non-archaic religion. Eliade found that for Christianity:

in the supreme *hierophany* (which, for a Christian, is the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ) there is no solution of continuity. In each case, we are confronted by the same mysterious act--the manifestation of something of a wholly different order, a reality that does not belong to our world, in objects that are an integral part of our natural "profane" world.²⁰

Thus, Eliade claimed the nature of sacred time in non-archaic religions is of a fundamentally different nature than that of archaic religions. Archaic religions access circular sacred time and the *illud tempus* while non-archaic religions access linear sacred time wherein the sacred is firmly linked to the historical timeline of linear events. It

¹⁸ Valk, John. "The Concept of the Coincidentia Oppositorum in the Thought of Mircea Eliade." *Religious Studies*, vol. 28, no. 1, 1992, pp. 31-41. 37.

¹⁹ Ibid. 37.

²⁰ Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1957. 11.

would seem that for Eliade linear sacred time and profane sacred time travel along the same linear history. Because he regarded rituals in Christianity and Judaism as only allowing religious persons to access the experience of *historical* moments, not the moment of creation itself, they do not participate in circular sacred time.²¹

Eliade argued that the incarnation of the divine in the form of Jesus Christ for Christianity represents a unique and new interaction between the sacred and profane history. He wrote that “we are prone to forget that God himself was accepting limitation and historicization by incarnating in Jesus Christ ... He had accepted limitation by life and by history.”²² This is of vital importance as it describes the role of avatars in Hinduism just as well as it describes the role of Jesus in Christianity. As I will discuss in depth in section 4.3.2, avatars in Hinduism are deities who deliberately choose to be incarnated into profane time and into the appearance of human form in order to intervene directly in the profane world.

Eliade also indicated that while *hierophanies* may appear through different profane forms (for example the difference between a rock and incarnated deity) all *hierophanies* represent instances of the sacred interacting with the profane world. In several instances, Eliade referred to the incarnation of Jesus in the world as the “supreme” or “total”²³ *hierophany* (which would seem to contradict his earlier

²¹ An interesting tangent would be to assess whether or not any rituals or other religious experiences in Christianity or Judaism could enable the experience of circular sacred time. However, in order to maintain a focused thesis, I choose not to address that issue here.

²² Eliade, Mircea. *Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries; the Encounter between Contemporary Faiths and Archaic Realities*. Harper, 1961. *The Library of Religion and Culture*.

²³ ---. *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism*. translated by Philip Mairet, Harvill Press, 1961. 170.

statements about Christianity taking part in *theophanies*, not *hierophanies*. He regarded the incantation of Jesus as “an audacious effort to save the historical event itself, by endowing it with the maximum of being.”²⁴ There is some debate in Eliade scholarship about this point and it seems to allude to the possibility of circular sacred time in Christianity, even though in other writings Eliade rejected that notion.

In a section of *The Sacred and the Profane* where he discussed the role of water as a religious symbol, he noted that in Christianity water is used for sacred ceremonies and rituals that embed the participating individual in linear sacred time. Eliade regarded moments of history such as Christ’s descent into the Jordan River and the Great Flood connected with Noah as historically sacred moments that are then revisited when an individual participates in the act of baptism.²⁵ Thus, baptism serves to reinforce that sacred time is linear and that an individual participating in a baptism does not connect to the mythic time of origins, but revisits sacred moments in the religion’s history. In contrast, a ritual in Hinduism which celebrates a birth establishes circular sacred time because it does not relate to the birth of a specific person in history, but to the archetype of the first birth and by extension the birth of the universe itself.

One might ask whether it is redundant to use the term “linear sacred time” when it seems that linear sacred time and profane historical time are progressing as one. Eliade maintained, and I strongly agree, that even though the profane and sacred time are progressing in tandem in Christianity and Judaism, sacred time and its

²⁴ Ibid. 170.

²⁵ ---. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1957. 134.

phenomenological relation to an individual's consciousness still exists. Dupré noted that for Eliade, a religious person in Christianity "must *re-present* the past."²⁶ While the original events remain as part of the historical timeline "yet faith enables the believer to become contemporary with them. In doing so he becomes contemporary with his past as well, and indeed with the entire past of history."²⁷ The individual experiencing linear sacred time does so "not merely by remembering them *as past*, but also, and especially, by withdrawing them from the original context and succession of actual perception."²⁸ For example, consider Liam, who is participating in a religious rite in Christianity. The rite itself is taking place in profane time at the present moment. However, through the experience of participation in that rite, Liam is consciously able to examine the sacred as connected to the original historical event commemorated by the rite. He is experiencing linear sacred time. A person who is experiencing linear sacred time is having a similar, although not identical, experience to an individual who is experiencing circular sacred time. Both the person experiencing linear sacred time and the person experiencing circular sacred time have connected to an experience of the sacred. However, the sacred that they are experiencing is of a different variety. The person experiencing linear sacred time experiences the sacred historical past "re-presented" while the person experiencing circular sacred time experiences the time of origins itself, set apart from the historical timeline.

²⁶ Dupré, Louis. "Alienation and Redemption Through Time and Memory: an Essay on Religious Time Consciousness." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, vol. 43, no. 4, 1975, pp. 671-679. 673.

²⁷ Ibid. 673.

²⁸ Ibid. 673.

I contend that there is no reason that linear sacred time cannot, and indeed does not, function as a component of religious experience in Hinduism.²⁹ Based on Eliade's own understanding of linear sacred time in Christianity and Judaism, it seems clear that a historically linear sacred time serves the purpose of returning participants in rituals to a phenomenologically sacred moment in time. The key difference between such moments in circular sacred time, as opposed to linear sacred time, is the nature of the sacred being experienced. The former is grounded in the *illud tempus* of origins while the latter is grounded in history. There is no reason individuals participating in Hinduism cannot experience both linear sacred time and circular sacred time, depending on the context of the ritual, festival or other sacred act in which they are participating.

4.3 Linear Sacred Time and its Role in Religious Experience in Hinduism

Now, having reviewed Eliade's conception of linear sacred time I will dedicate the remainder of this chapter to supporting my key argument, namely that Eliade was incorrect to say that linear sacred time is not present in archaic religions such as Hinduism. To support my thesis, I will revisit the pre-classical and classical periods of Hinduism. Firstly, I will offer evidence for linear sacred time from the pre-classical period in the *Vedas*, dealing particularly with the incarnation of deities as avatars and of

²⁹ I believe that this argument could be extended to cover other religions that Eliade would have termed archaic, for example Buddhism. However, such an extension is beyond the scope of this particular project.

devotional sacrifice directed toward particular deities. Secondly, in the classical period, I will find that there is ample evidence of linear sacred time in two of the great sacred epics of Hinduism, the *Bhagavad-gītā* (a portion of the much longer *Mahābhārata*) and the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Lastly, I'll conclude this chapter with a discussion of some approaches that enable a religious person to enter into an experience of linear sacred time through practices such as *bhakti*, "devotion," and festivals and rituals. I will draw on further parallel examples of linear sacred time in Judaism and Christianity to support this analysis.

4.3.1 Linear Sacred Time in the Pre-Classical Period

Earlier in chapter three, I noted that the pre-classical period contains many examples of circular sacred time in Hinduism which is accordance with Eliade's theory of sacred time in archaic religions. However, it is important to note that a case can also be made for examples of linear sacred time in the pre-classical period. Recall the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, which was discussed earlier in chapter three. In it, we find a detailed explanation of the nature of *Brahman* and the creation of the gods from *Brahman*:

11. Verily, in the beginning, this world was *Brahman*, one only. Being one, he was not developed. He created still further a superior form, the *kṣātrahood*, even those who are *kṣātras* (rulers) among the gods: Indra, Varuṇa, Soma, Rudra, Prajanya, Yama, Mṛtyu, Iśāna ...³⁰

A great many deities are created in the phenomenal world throughout the history of Hinduism. *Brahman* simply exists in the eternity that is before the mythical time of creation. Eventually, as discussed earlier, *Brahman* becomes differentiated into various entities, including the gods and later their avatars. On one level, these deities may function as archetypes for the mythical time of original creation in the way that Eliade described, but I feel that this is an incomplete understanding of the role that such deities played in the lives of historically real persons. For instance, consider Agni who is discussed in the *Ṛg Veda*, “To Agni.” “Being born in the highest heaven, Agni became visible to Mātariśvan ...”³¹ In his footnote to this Vedic hymn, Radakrishnan notes that “Matarisvan was “A divine being described in the *Ṛg Veda* I.60.1 as bringing Agni to Bhṛgu, an ancient *ṛṣi* or sage.”³² While on one one level Agni can be viewed as a mythical archetype, on a very different level the reference to Matarisvan and Bhṛgu implies a direct intervention or interaction between Agni and profane linear time. A direct interaction with a sage in profane time is much more in keeping with linear sacred

³⁰ *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. I.iv.10.

³¹ *Maitri Upaniṣad*. 1.

³² Radhakrishnan, Sarvepalli and Charles A. Moore. *A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy*. Princeton University Press, 1989. 9.

time (as exemplified by Eliade's discussion of Moses, Christ, and Abraham) than with circular sacred time.

Further exploration of the *R̥g Veda* provides additional instances where the deities could be said to interact directly with profane historical time – and that a ritual or even an intentional reading of these hymns by *homo religiosus* would enable that person to participate in linear sacred time. Earlier, in Chapter 3, discussing circular sacred time I referenced the beginning of the *Hymn of Creation* from the *R̥g Veda*. The first five passages from this hymn do exemplify circular sacred time and reinforce that *Brahman* existed as eternal, *nirguna Brahman* before *saguna Brahman* is brought forth. However, slightly further on this text states that

6. ...The gods were born after this world's creation ...

7. None knoweth whence creation has arisen;

And whether he has or has not produced it:

He who surveys it in the highest heave,

He only knows, or haply he may know not.³³

If the mythical time of creation, the *illud tempus* of circular sacred time according to This text from the *Hymn to Creation*, means that the gods were not created before the world was created, but during the creation process in the mythical time of creation. The creation. Eliade, is the defining concept for circular sacred time, then it would seem that in Hinduism there is a conception of the gods coming into existence *after* the mythical time of creation. If this is the case, then it would seem that such deities may be more

³³ *R̥g Veda. Hymn to Creation. 6-7.*

directly associated with linear profane time and so by extension, the sacred known through them would be a linear sacred time.

A number of other deities, for example, Vishnu, Shiva, and Brahma appear in the early *Vedas* as *saguna Brahman*, incarnated in the world. These deities later interact directly in profane history as historical persons. For example, I will later discuss, Krishna³⁴ who functions as an avatar (incarnation of Vishnu) in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and Rama³⁵ who an avatar of Vishnu who appears in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Even before they are incarnated as historical persons in the Classical period, these deities exemplify instances of linear sacred time in the pre-classical period. In the passages below, a petitioner offers prayer's to Agni, seeking for the god to intervene directly in the petitioner's life:

6. Would Agni eagerly come to our hymn? Would He the Vasu together with the Vasus fulfill our desire? Will He, the driver, stir our prayers that they may be successful ...
8. Preserve us, O Agni, never failing with thy never-failing, kind and mighty guardians; protect our people all around ...³⁶

Direct intervention to act as guardian, fulfiller of desires and prayers means that Agni would be participating in profane time. The prayer to Agni exemplifies linear sacred time because the petitioner does not seek Agni's aid to return to the mythical time of

³⁴ Krishna is an alternate spelling of Kṛṣṇa and is often used in contemporary English writing about this deity. I make use of Krishna without the diacriticals, unless Kṛṣṇa is the spelling used by an author in a quotation.

³⁵ I do not include diacritical in my spelling of Rama as most contemporary sources do not make use of them. Rāma is an alternative spelling of Rama.

³⁶ *Ṛg Veda*. "To Agni." I.143.6, 8.

creation. Thus, the experience of the sacred described in this hymn cannot be an experience of circular sacred time.

Also, consider the deities of the *trimūrti*; Brahma as the god of creation, Vishnu as the god of preservation, and Shiva as the god of destruction. In the *Maitri Upaniṣad*, we see the *trimūrti* as Rudra, Brahma, and Vishnu.³⁷ “He [Brahman] being one, becomes three, becomes eight, becomes eleven, becomes twelve, becomes infinite.”³⁸ *Brahman*, as *saguna Brahman* is embodied in the three deities of the *trimūrti* and then later those deities become further divided into other deities and avatars of deities and then still later into individual *ātman*.

In the *Ṛg Veda*, we find a hymn “*To Yama*” which contains examples of sacrifices to Yama, made with the goal of having Yama’s intervention in their afterlife.

13. For Yama press the soma juice,

To Yama offering present.

To Yama goes the sacrifice ...

15. ... Let him direct us to the gods,

That we may live a life prolonged.³⁹

Here the sacrifices are being made to Yama, not with the goal of attaining eternal liberation and unification of *ātman* with *Brahman*. Instead, these are direct pleas of

³⁷ Note that the names of the three deities in the *trimūrti* vary somewhat between different texts. The names, roles and genealogy of various deities within Hinduism are complex. At present, the *trimūrti* is most often described as Shiva, Vishnu, and Brahma but in earlier Soma, Agni and Vayu. Rudra takes the place of Shiva in the *Maitri Upaniṣad*. It is also important to note that the formalization of the *trimūrti* as a concept comes much later on in the History of Hinduism in the *Kūrma Purāṇa*.

³⁸ Muller, F. Max. *The Upanishads*. The Clarendon press, 1879. *The Sacred Books of the East*, vol. I, XV. *Maitri Upanishad*. V.2.

³⁹ *Ṛg Veda*. “*To Yama*.” X.14.13, 15.

devotion and sacrifice for Yama to intercede with the historical timeline of the devotee's life and to enable the devotee to enter into a heaven. The heaven that the devotee seeks is not the eternal sacred time of creation – *nirguna Brahman*. It is instead a specific lived experience that the devotee hopes to have a pause in their quest to attain circular sacred time. The sacrifices to Yama mentioned in these passages are not archetypes that represent the sacrifices of the mythical time of creation. Because the devotee is asking for direct intervention in profane linear history, this would not seem to meet Eliade's definition of circular sacred time. It is instead an early instance in Hinduism of linear sacred time – a historically grounded experience of the sacred.

4.3.2 Linear Sacred Time in the Classical Period – Avatars and *Itihāsa* Texts

Moving forward in the history of Hinduism, we come to the Classical period. In this section, I will briefly revisit the *Upaniṣads* to point out a few examples of avatars incarnated in profane linear time, before moving on to discuss two of the most significant *smṛti* texts, the *Mahābrātra* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*. It is important to note that both the *Mahābrātra* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* are *itihāsa* texts, meaning they are regarded as “history” or “this is how it happened.” Both works take the form of lengthy epic poems. This means that there is widely held belief that *itihāsa* works are those that narrate actual historical events and as such are not myths or fictional accounts.

In discussing the *Bhagavad-gītā*, chapters 7-12 are particularly relevant to the topic of sacred time in Hinduism. Discussing these chapters of the *Bhagavad-gītā*

enables us to revisit *karma*, *dharma*, and the *ātman-Brahman* cycle, which were discussed in chapter three. In chapter three, I presented evidence that these concepts could provide an access point to the experience of circular sacred time. Here I will show that they also can connect directly to the experience of linear sacred time. Recall that *saguna Brahman* is differentiated *Brahman*, and this includes the mortal forms of divine deities as avatars. In their divinity, deities can have knowledge of *Brahman* that would be impossible for an individual *person (jīva)* to know.⁴⁰ In some instances, deities remain remote from human beings and the material world, but on numerous occasions recounted in sacred texts, a Hindu deity was incarnated into a material form (often human, but not necessarily so).

The deities, including Krishna, who is featured in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, are differentiated *Brahman*. Eliade failed to address that when these deities take on human lives as incarnated avatars, they enter into the historical profane linear timeline a similar way that Christ was in Christianity. Both the *Bhagavad-gītā* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* exemplify this way for linear sacred time to take place in Hinduism. This directly parallels Eliade's understanding of linear time in Christianity where there is a similar example when Christ enters into linear sacred time.

In *Bhagavad-gītā* a deity, Vishnu, is incarnated in the phenomenal world in human form as Krishna. As Krishna, he plays the role of the charioteer, confidant, and

⁴⁰ Recall that due to the limitations of human consciousness, even when religious persons are having an experience of the sacred, they cannot grasp the true nature of *Brahman*, only an approximation of it. We find an analogous concept in Maimonides' understanding of negative theology in Judaism wherein the deity cannot be known, instead, only what the deity is not is accessible to human understanding.

spiritual mentor to the *Bhagavad-gītā*'s human hero, Arjuna. Krishna is incarnated into the form of a mortal human being and is part of a linear profane timeline. This provides us with an excellent example of the relationship between the fundamentally atemporal *Brahman* and the avatars that live in and experience the world both in terms of sacred and profane time along with the impact of these avatars on human beings who interact with them. As Radhakrishnan and Moore discussed, "The *Gīta* makes out that Krishna is an incarnation (*avatarana*) or descent of the Divine into the human frame."⁴¹ Therefore, the divine, *Brahman*, has entered into the historical timeline in the form of an avatar. As Radhakrishnan pointed out "If God is looked upon as the savior of man, He must manifest Himself whenever the forces of evil threaten to destroy human values."⁴² In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, there is an overall goal of teaching readers to understand the *ātman-Brahman* dichotomy, the *karmic* cycle, and details about *Brahman* and the origin of the material world. The hero, Arjuna seeks to understand the nature of *Brahman* as incarnated in the deity Krishna. Arjuna also faces a significant ethical crisis. The exact character of this moral crisis is not particularly relevant here, but the broader implications of what the situation and persons represent are. Very generally, in the *Bhagavad-gītā* Arjuna is facing an ethical crisis, something that everyday persons will face throughout their lives. Krishna deliberately enters into the profane historical linear timeline to guide Arjuna to salvation, and by extension provides a model for ethical decision making from which other humans can learn. It is believed that the events of

⁴¹ Radhakrishnan, Sarvepalli and Charles A. Moore. *A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy*. Princeton University Press, 1989. 101.

⁴² *Ibid.* 101.

the *Bhagavad-gītā* took place in this profane history of India. Just as the god Vishnu, incarnated as Krishna in a mortal human body, enters the profane time to assist Arjuna in a moment of crisis, so too can the sacred be found at the linear time in the profane world to guide individuals. Krishna, in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, merely represents one of many possible instances where there is deliberate intervention by the divine in profane history. In this case, the divine enters linear profane history via the incarnation of an avatar, but also note that the divine can also enter into profane linear time through both ritual and devotion as I will later discuss.

Consider the role that suffering has in Christianity to its role in Hinduism. In *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*, Eliade had an interesting analysis of the role that he felt suffering played in archaic societies. While his analysis of suffering is filled with examples from various cultures and religions, in short, his argument on suffering boils down to something very simple. Eliade claimed that individuals in archaic religions were able to tolerate suffering because they assigned suffering to some external cause such as magic, breaking a divine taboo, angering a deity or demons.⁴³ To combat suffering, they turned to counter magic, intervention by priests, or prayer for intervention by a deity.⁴⁴ Eliade discussed *karma* in Hinduism as an example of an archaic societies' attempt to explain the cause of suffering and render it meaningful.⁴⁵ "Liberation from the karmic law is equivalent to cure."⁴⁶ An individual's

⁴³ Eliade, Mircea. *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper & Brothers, 1954. 96.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 96-97.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 98-99.

suffering may be taking place at a point in linear profane history, but the path to end suffering is to seek liberation through the experience of the sacred. As I discussed earlier in chapter three, Eliade seemed to oversimplify suffering and viewed it as something people sought to end by reaching liberation from the profane world and union with eternal *Brahman* undifferentiated in circular sacred time. A more robust understanding of suffering in Hinduism includes acknowledgment that while some people may seek to end suffering through the experience of circular sacred time, others will seek to experience linear sacred time through devotional, *bhakti*, pleas for a deity or avatar to intervene in history on their behalf. In such cases, the person connects to the sacred through history itself and thus experiences linear sacred time. To illustrate my point, consider the following comparison between Eliade's description of suffering in Judaism and Christianity and the interactions between a religious person and an avatar or deity in Hinduism.

Abraham's sacrifice in Christianity serves as an example of the difference between "repetition of an archetypal gesture"⁴⁷ and the new understanding of linear sacred time that Eliade attributed to "modern" religions. Eliade noted that on one level it might be possible to read Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son as an example of the sacrifice archetype connecting to sacrifice at the time of origins. However, Eliade believed that what makes Abraham's sacrifice different is that Abraham's act was "an act of faith. He does not understand why the sacrifice is demanded of him; nevertheless,

⁴⁶ ---. *Myth and Reality*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper & Row, 1963. 85.

⁴⁷ ---. *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper & Brothers, 1954. 108.

he performs it because it was the Lord who demanded it.”⁴⁸ If the same act were to take place in an archaic religion Eliade believed that it would have been “a custom, a rite whose meaning was perfectly intelligible ...”⁴⁹ God became personalized for Abraham and Abraham did not have rational understanding for why he should perform this act, only that he will do it for the sake of his faith in God. Abraham experiences no return to the mythical creation of the universe via circular sacred time because Abraham’s intention is not to connect to circular sacred time with a sacrifice that mimics all other earlier sacrifices. Eliade did not deny that the sacred is a component of Abraham’s sacrifice, but it is the sacred as conceived of in linear sacred time.

Now consider the *Bhagavad-gītā* in comparison to the Abraham example. Krishna as an advisor to Arjuna enters into profane history. Arjuna does not possess a clear, rational understanding of how he should act when in fact he spends time talking to Krishna to try to understand how and why he should behave according to the dictates of *karma* and *dharma*. There is no instinctive or simple understanding of how custom tells Arjuna to behave. Arjuna faces a moment of crisis early on in the text wherein he sees that many people are arrayed on both sides of the battlefield and recognizes that they are individual people with their lives, relationships, and value as living human beings. Arjuna then questions how he, one single person, should have the power to start a battle that may lead to a large number of deaths. “Having spoken thus on the field of battle, Arjuna sank down on the seat of his chariot, casting away his bow and

⁴⁸ Ibid. 109.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 109.

arrow, his spirit overwhelmed by sorrow.”⁵⁰ Later, at the conclusion of the epic Arjuna comes to a decision that he will follow the instructions of the divine and will take action, not sit aside and ignore his duty as a ruler. In his final conversation with Krishna, Arjuna chooses to take action based on faith.

8. “Verily the renunciation of any duty that ought to be done is not right.

The abandonment of it though ignorance is declared to be of the nature of “dullness.”

73. “... I stand firm with my doubts dispelled. I shall act according to Thy word.”

Through an act of faith, Arjuna chooses to take action, even though doing so seems to go against his instinct to preserve life and to not be the person who initiates a great battle. Logic made Arjuna hesitate, just as Abraham hesitates to sacrifice his son.

Arjuna’s decision to start the battle does not come from an experience of circular sacred time, but through historical intervention by a deity, just as Abraham’s decision is arrived at through historical intervention of the divine. Since in Eliade’s theory of sacred time Abraham provides evidence for linear sacred time, then so does must Arjuna’s experience in the *Bhagavad-gītā* provide evidence of linear sacred time for Hinduism.

In chapters 10 and 11 of the *Bhagavad-gītā* Arjuna realizes that his charioteer is the avatar of the god Vishnu. Arjuna then asks Krishna “Tell me who Thou art with form so terrible ... I wish to know Thee [whom art] the Primal One, for I know not Thy

⁵⁰ *Bhagavad-gītā*. 1.47.

working.”⁵¹ To this query, Krishna replies, “Time I am, world-destroying, grown mature, engaged here in subduing the world. Even without thee [thy action], all the warriors standing arrayed in the opposing armies shall cease to be.”⁵² Arjuna expressed confusion about the different forms that Krishna could take and asked for an explanation of how the divine has come to be incarnated in the phenomenal world. Arjuna admits his ignorance of the sacred and asks Krishna for clarification:

16. Arjuna said:

Thou shouldst tell me of Thy divine manifestations, without exception, whereby, pervading this world, Thou dost abide [in them and beyond].

17. How may I know Thee, o *Yogin*, by constant meditation? In what various aspects art Thou, O Blessed Lord, to be thought of by me?⁵³

Here we find that Arjuna recognizes that Krishna is the incarnation of *Brahman* in the form of an avatar. However, Arjuna remains puzzled as to how it is possible for Krishna to be *Brahman* and yet be incarnated in a physical body at the same time. Arjuna also seeks information about how a human such as himself might come to know *Brahman*.

Krishna then replies and discusses the various ways in which *Brahman* may be differentiated in the world, including an extensive list of different gods, sages, animals, natural phenomena, words, death, memory, hymns, poets and more.⁵⁴ Krishna states

⁵¹ *Bhagavad-gītā*. 11.31.

⁵² *Bhagavad-gītā*. 11.32.

⁵³ *Bhagavad-gītā*. 10.16-17.

⁵⁴ *Bhagavad-gītā*. 10.19-42.

that “of the Titans I am Prahlāda; of calculators I am Time ..., ”⁵⁵ “of creations I am the beginning, the end and also the middle ...”⁵⁶ and “of letters I am (the letter) A and of compounds (I am) the dual; I also am imperishable time and I the creator whose face is turned on all sides.”⁵⁷ On one level, these descriptions of who Krishna is could connect to circular sacred time and the idea is that *Brahman* is both time itself and beyond time as eternal. *Brahman* is the source of all creation including the profane time. This is indicated by the references to the existence of tensed time in the form of objects coming into existence, existing and then going out of existence (beginning, middle, end). Beyond that, we also see *Brahman* is “inexhaustible time.” *Brahman* can be profane and tensed or literally outside of time and eternal. Eliade held that *homo religiosus* inhabits two distinct types of time and that of the two, sacred and profane, sacred is much more valuable. “there is always the danger of forgetting what is fundamental – that existence is not given by what modern men call Nature but is a creation of *Others*, the gods or semi-divine beings ... by learning again how the gods or the mythical ancestors created man and taught him the various kinds of social behavior and of practical work.”⁵⁸ Recall that my primary arguments is that both linear sacred time and circular sacred time coexist in Hinduism. Depending on the intentionality behind the way a religious person interacts with the content of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, it is possible that they might experience a different type of sacred time. If the individual focuses on the theoretical

⁵⁵ *Bhagavad-gītā*. 10.30.

⁵⁶ *Bhagavad-gītā*. 10.32.

⁵⁷ *Bhagavad-gītā*. 10.33.

⁵⁸ Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1957. 89-90.

aspects of the relationship between *ātman* and *Brahman*, then circular sacred time might be experienced. However, if the individual focuses on the historical interaction of the avatar in profane history and, as I will discuss later *bhakti*, then linear sacred time might be experienced.

In Chapter 11 of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Arjuna is taught that the god, as differentiated *Brahman* is itself time, that which causes the end (and conversely the beginning) of the phenomenal world. Obviously, here time cannot be merely profane time or phenomenally bound history but something more. *Brahman* can choose to interact with the material world and to place itself into linear time in the form of a divine being such as Krishna. Yet despite this, the divine reveals itself as the eternal sacred in the sense that it is greater than mere profane time, *Brahman* is a reality that is beyond and has unlimited power over profane time. Arjuna, through this conversation, comes to realize that it is possible for sacred time, in the form of *Brahman* to “irrupt” into the world in the shape of a divine being who has an awareness of not only profane but also of the circular sacred time that is *Brahman*. Krishna, in his human avatar form, is the sacred embodied in the real, historical timeline. It is this “irruption” that I am most concerned with since it shows the entrance of a deity into the profane historical timeline which contradicts Eliade’s claim that such historical interactions exist only in non-archaic religions such as Christianity.

Samjaya, a character in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, noted that “There the Pāṇḍeva (Arjuna) beheld the whole universe, with its manifold divisions gathered together in one, in the body of the God of gods.”⁵⁹ Arjuna can recognize that the sacred itself is manifest in the physical world, and by extension participates in linear sacred time. “Time I am, world-destroying, grown mature, engaged here in subduing the world. Even without thee [thy action], all the warriors standing arrayed in the opposing armies shall cease to be.”⁶⁰ It is with Krishna’s assistance that Arjuna can become aware of the nature of time itself and that sacred time is different from profane time. Rao, in discussing the *Bhagavad-gītā* points this out: “The question of Time depends on the relationship which holds between a human observer and his finite level.”⁶¹ In this case, the human Arjuna can participate in the experience of linear sacred time. He engages directly with the sacred in the form of Krishna.

Consider what we know about the function of linear sacred time in Eliade’s theory. Recall that according to Eliade:

Since God was *incarnated*, that is, since he took on a *historically conditioned human existence* ... When a Christian of our day participates in liturgical time, he recovers the *illud tempus* in which Christ lived, suffered, and rose again—but it is no longer a mythical time.⁶²

⁵⁹ *Bhagavad-gītā*. 11.13.

⁶⁰ *Bhagavad-gītā*. 11.32.

⁶¹ Rao, Rallapalli Venkateswara. *The Concept of Time in Ancient India*. C.P. Gautam, 2004. 21.

⁶² Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1957. 111-112.

There is a clear parallel between the incarnation of Christ in a “historically conditioned human existence”⁶³ and Krishna incarnated into a human, historically linear timeline in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. For a religious person in Christianity to participate in a ritual related to the life of Christ, that person participates in linear sacred time. It then follows that a religious person in Hinduism who participates in a ritual tied to Krishna’s life would also be participating in an intentional experience of linear sacred time.

In *The Sacred and the Profane*, Eliade noted that deities “among the primitives”⁶⁴ were regarded as having a great deal of power over fertility and life, but that such deities were worshiped because of the connection their powers had to the historical timeline. These deities were able to intervene in current events in the profane linear timeline but lacked the ultimate power to connect to the time of origins. These types of deities fit in with the cosmic rhythms and were “specialists” so they lost the powers of creator gods. A person who worships such deities “gave himself up to vital heterophonies and turned from the sacrality that transcended his immediate and daily needs.”⁶⁵ Of particular importance is Eliade’s use of the term “heterophonies.” The *hierophany* of circular sacred time enables the participant to recognize the homogeneity of the universe. “Heterophonies” implies that the deities and worship enable the heterogeneity that Eliade associates with “modern” religions and linear sacred time. If we compare Krishna to the Eliade’s description of deities because of their connection to the historical timeline, I believe that it reinforces that the *Bhagavad-gītā* is

⁶³ Ibid. 111-112.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 127. Here “primitive” specifically refers to the Baals and Astartes.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 128.

representative of linear sacred time in Hinduism. The events of the *Bhagavad-gītā* are not treated as sacred because they do not represent the primordial time of creation. They are treated as a manifestation of the sacred in history, and as such a person who interacts with the sacred via reading or recitation of the *Bhagavad-gītā* is able to have the experience of linear sacred time. Krishna directly intervenes in history but without any power of creation, or even of destruction. Krishna functions as a mentor and teacher, and while he is attempting to guide Arjuna through complex concepts about the nature of reality, ethics and eternal *Brahman*, Krishna acts as a “specialist” not a creator.

Regarding Yahweh in Judaism, Eliade wrote “His gestures are *personal* interventions in history ... Hence, the historical even acquires a new dimension; it becomes a *theophany*.”⁶⁶ The intervention of the sacred into the linear timeline is decidedly evident when Krishna enters linear profane time and intervenes with Arjuna. Krishna makes a personal intervention to mentor Arjuna on the nature of *Brahman* and other sacred concepts. This is *not* an instance of circular sacred time in Hinduism. Krishna, as an avatar, represents a situation wherein, as Eliade himself defined it, a *theophany* occurs. Linear sacred time in Hinduism is established by means of avatars (and here Krishna represents just one example of the many interventions by different avatars into profane linear history in Hinduism). It is true that the concepts being taught by Krishna might represent topics that connect to the eternal, timeless *Brahman* but this could also be said of the concepts taught by Jesus in Christianity. Devotees of either

⁶⁶ Ibid. 111.

Krishna or Jesus who directly experience the sacred through accounts of the lives of such incarnated figures through the divine's "personal interventions in history" access the sacred through linear sacred time.

Again, regarding Christianity, Eliade commented that "For the Christian, too, the sacred calendar indefinitely rehearses the same events of the existence of Christ – but these events took place in history; they are no longer facts that happened at the *origin of time*, "in the beginning.""⁶⁷ These facts are the sacred manifest as linear sacred time. Krishna's interactions with Arjuna also take place in linear historical time. *Brahman*, as differentiated in Krishna is the sacred manifest in the linear historical world. Thus, sacred time in Hinduism is not always a sacred time that returns to the *illud tempus* of the origin of the universe. Instead, sacred time can also be the *illud tempus* that occurs when the sacred manifests in profane time. In a later chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Krishna states the following:

23. "Aum Tat Sat"—this is considered to be the threefold symbol of *Brahman*. By this were ordained of old the *brāhmins*, the Vedas, and the sacrifices.

24. Therefore with the utterance of "aum" the acts of sacrifice, gift, and penance, enjoined in the scriptures are always undertaken by the expounders of *Brahman*.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Ibid. 112.

⁶⁸ *Bhagavad-gītā*. 17.23-24.

Here we see evidence that a person, through performing religious acts such as those listed above, may experience the *theophany* of linear sacred time. The person is not intentionally experiencing the time of origins but is instead revisiting the time in which the historically sacred events occurred. For example, when a sacrifice is performed “man reaches the shores of the other world and is saved from the grip of Time.”⁶⁹ The religious individual becomes contemporary with the historical event represented by the sacrifice and participates in linear sacred time. Without question, I think it is fair to say that a rite that connects to the incarnation of a deity on earth, such as Krishna in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, is an instance of linear sacred time.

In *Myth and Reality*, Eliade differentiated between “true stories” and “false stories.” He took these terms largely from several different Native American cultures but then applied them broadly to archaic cultures as a whole. True stories are those that are myths and deal with deities and the means by which something was created or comes to be as it is in the time of origins. In contrast “false stories” are those grounded in the profane and in human actions, history and heroes and adventures. Actors in myths are “usually, Gods and Supernatural Beings, while those in tales are heroes or miraculous animals.”⁷⁰ If we apply these two definitions to the Arjuna’s adventures in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, it would seem that the *Bhagavad-gītā* blurs the lines between being a “true story” and a “false story”. It does not connect to the time of origins nor to events of the original time of creation. So in that sense, it is not a “true story.” The

⁶⁹ Rao, Rallapalli Venkateswara. *The Concept of Time in Ancient India*. C.P. Gautam, 2004. 3.

⁷⁰ Eliade, Mircea. *Myth and Reality*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper & Row, 1963.10.

Bhagavad-gītā describes human actions, adventures of a hero and an incarnated deity that takes place in profane time. Here the lines begin to blur because the *Bhagavad-gītā* involves both the gods that Eliade earmarked as being part of “true stories” but also includes those gods incarnated in theory and interacting with heroes who are real historical persons associated with “false stories.” Thus it does not seem to qualify for something which connects the listener to circular sacred time – yet it still addresses the sacred. A “false story” “refers to events that, even when they have caused changes in the World ... have not altered the human condition as such.”⁷¹ The *Bhagavad-gītā* describes events that took place in history but the events in themselves have not “altered the human condition,” at least in the sense that Eliade utilized this phrase. From one point of view, it is possible to say that by his intervention in history, Krishna does alter the human condition because he provides advice and instruction that causes Arjuna to make the decision to initiate a battle and that battle causes death. Through devotion and intentional interaction with the sacred through the *Bhagavad-gītā* both Arjuna and a religious person interacting with this epic could find instruction to help them better understand *Brahman* and their relationship with the sacred. However, I do not think that this is what Eliade implied by “alters the human condition.” The *Bhagavad-gītā* provides teaching and instruction for how to interact with the sacred in one’s life, but it is up to the individual to choose whether to take action or to disregard those teachings.

⁷¹ Ibid. 11.

Also in *Myth and Reality* Eliade delineated five criteria for myth and the circularity of sacred time as related to archaic societies. To paraphrase Eliade, these three criteria are as follows: (1) it is history but only as related to supernatural beings, (2) it is *true* history, (3) it always describes creation and the time of origins and (4) knowledge of that creation is attained through recitation of myth or participation in ritual that relates to that creation and (5) a person participating in a ritual or recitation of myth engages in the phenomenological experience of being present at the time of the original event. The sacred past is made present to the individual via the myth or ritual.⁷² If we consider the *Bhagavad-gītā* in light of these five criteria, it would seem that the minimum, the *Bhagavad-gītā* fails to meet criteria (1) and (3). The *Bhagavad-gītā* does describe history, including supernatural beings in the form of incarnated deities. However, it *does not* include a history of only supernatural beings. Much of the focus of the epic is on the deeds of humans such as Arjuna. It describes events in history, but not the time of origins. This then offers additional support to my argument that the *Bhagavad-gītā* exemplifies linear sacred time in Hinduism.

4.3.3 Linear Sacred Time in the Classical Period – *Bhakti*

Section 4.3.2 offers ample evidence to support my argument that avatars such as Krishna, and *itihāsa* texts such as the *Bhagavad-gītā* can enable the experience of linear sacred time. So, I now briefly examine another major *śruti* text from the Classical period,

⁷² Ibid. 18-19.

the *Rāmāyaṇa*. As Radhakrishnan noted, “The *Rāmāyaṇa* deals with the conflict of the Aryans with the then natives of India and the penetration of the Aryan Culture.”⁷³ There are a number of different versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in English and a great many of versions and interpretations of this text in both Sanskrit and other languages through history. I utilize Ramesh Menon’s version, *The Rāmāyaṇa: A Modern Retelling*⁷⁴ in the passages quoted below. The *Rāmāyaṇa*’s original authorship is credited to Valmiki who is believed to have lived contemporarily with Rama during the time that the events in the story take place. Historically, the events in this epic take place during the *treta yuga*. During “the *treta yuga*, *adharmā*, evil, enters the world and the very fabric of time begins to decay.”⁷⁵ Note that the events of the *Rāmāyaṇa* take place at a point in history that is well after the mythical time of original creation. The profane historical timeline of the world has begun, and during the course of this story, events proceed in a linear fashion that directly connects to the history of India.

From the outset, it is clear that the *Rāmāyaṇa* does not satisfy Eliade’s five criteria for myth that can establish the experience of circular sacred time. The *Rāmāyaṇa* is a history but includes both supernatural and human people from profane time. Thus it fails criteria one of Eliade’s definition of myth, namely that a myth is a “history of supernatural beings.” Additionally, the *Rāmāyaṇa* fails to satisfy criteria three since it does not describe “creation and the time of origins.” Thus, just as with the

⁷³ Radhakrishnan, Sarvepalli and Charles A. Moore. *A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy*. Princeton University Press, 1989. 99.

⁷⁴ Menon, Ramesh. *The Ramayana: a Modern Retelling*. Harper Collins and the India Today Group, 2005.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 26.

Bhagavad-gītā, the *Rāmāyaṇa* is decidedly a text that connects those who interact with it to the sacred mythical origin of the universe. It instead connects the devotees to the time in which the events in the epic took place in history.

This text tells the story of the Rama's life and quest to overcome the evil King Ravana. Rama is the seventh avatar of the god Vishnu. Krishna is regarded as the eighth avatar of Vishnu. Just as with Krishna, Rama is the divine deliberately incarnated into profane linear time as a mortal human. While the following summary is a vast oversimplification of the content of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, it will serve to set the stage for my discussion of linear sacred time in relation to this text. In this epic, there are conspiracies to replace Rama as the heir to the throne and eventually Rama's wife Sita is kidnaped by a rival king, Ravana. Rama then undergoes a lengthy journey to attempt her rescue, encountering many challenges and opportunities to impact history along the way. The text also explains that the demon Ravana gained a favor from the god Brahma which was to "Then bless me [Ravana] that I never find death at the hands of a god ... or any of the divine and demonic beings of heaven and earth."⁷⁶ The text goes on to explain that Ravana was arrogant and did not regard mortal humans as threatening enough to include in his boon. This ultimately proves to be his downfall. Ravana then has developed nearly undefeatable powers and causes much strife and destruction in the profane world. In order to address the damages that Ravana has caused, the deity Vishnu intentionally chooses to be incarnated into the mortal *avatar* that is Rama.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 30-31.

Rama is the *avatar* of the god Vishnu in much the same way Krishna is an avatar of Vishnu in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Sharma noted “Rama was an *avatāra*, like Krishna. It is clear, therefore that the *Avatāra* doctrine provides a kind of *dues ex machina* which at least temporarily annuls the consequences of the Yuga theory.”⁷⁷ Recall that *yugas* are intervals of profane time in Hinduism. Here, as Sharma pointed out, there is yet another example of the incarnation of a deity in human form, participating in the linear historical profane timeline. Linear sacred time is then established when *homo religiosus* individuals participate in a ritual or other religious practice that enables them to reconstruct the historical events of Rama incarnated into the physical world. This clearly parallels Eliade’s use of a ritual remembering the death of Christ as an example of linear sacred time in Christianity and reinforces that Eliade was mistaken to claim that linear sacred time is not evident in archaic religions such as Hinduism.

As I earlier discussed in the context of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, the fact that Rama as an avatar is incarnated into profane time would then mean that, like Jesus, he experiences of the sacred connected to Rama’s life and deeds establish linear profane time. I will not repeat those arguments here but will instead offer an additional point of evidence based on *bhakti*, “devotion,” in favor of the *Rāmāyaṇa* (and by extension the *Bhagavad-gītā*) and their associated deities being exemplary of linear sacred time in Hinduism.

⁷⁷ Sharma, Arvind. "The Notion of Cyclical Time in Hinduism." *Time in Indian Philosophy: A Collection of Essays*, edited by Hari Shankar Prasad, Sirt Satguru Publications, 1992. 209.

Through *bhakti*, Krishna's presence, Rama's presence, or that of another avatar or deity in Hinduism, can be brought into a religious person's linear profane life. This transforms that experience into an experience of linear sacred time. The sacred can directly re-enter linear profane temporality through the life of a devotee. Through the practice of *bhakti*, individuals who interact with the *Rāmāyaṇa* or *Bhagavad-gītā* enter into an experience of the sacred. The exact method of engaging in *bhakti* can differ depending on the school of Hinduism one follows and also on the particular deity that one is practicing devotion toward. For my purposes the exact methods of practicing *bhakti* are irrelevant, it is the intentionality behind the practice that matters.

Vishnu is one of the most common recipients of *bhakti*, and the devotion is typically directed toward his avatars (particularly Rama and Krishna). Devotional activities can include but are not limited to, singing or reciting hymns, rituals, festivals, devotional praise, and material sacrifices. In section 4.3.1 I discussed sacrifices from the *Vedic* period and made a case for the experience of linear sacred time being possible through ritual sacrifice and devotion to some of the early *Vedic* deities such as Yama. The interaction of such deities as avatars incarnated in linear profane time continues in the *Upaniṣads* and various types of sacrifice can be integrated into some *bhakti* practices.

On one level, a person interacting with a sacred epic in Hinduism can experience the sacred time in which the original events took place in history which would have to be an experience of linear sacred time since it would not be a return to a mythical time of origins. This parallels the experience of linear sacred time encountered via the

history of Christ in Christianity. On a different level, a person might view the *Bhagavad-gītā* as a model through which he can learn, and then apply in his own life, *bhakti* toward Krishna. Through devotional activities, the religious person in Hinduism can seek the direct intervention of Krishna, and by extension Vishnu, into profane time. If a person encounters the sacred through such divine intervention into history, he does not experience the original time of creation, and therefore is not engaged with circular sacred time.

Singh noted that "*bhakti* was meant to raise the quality of the present existence rather than help in the pursuit of well-defined religious objectives."⁷⁸ So *bhakti* activities directed toward Rama or Krishna (as avatars of Vishnu) are not always a means through which a person would experience circular sacred time. The devotional activities are typically centered on the person's present life, in profane time and are an invitation or request for the deity to interact directly in the profane time in which the person is living. Singh wrote that *bhakti* can involve "recognition of God's charity, friendliness, and deep involvement in human affairs, as well as man's self-surrendering prayer (*nivedana*), symbolic offerings (*archana*), and sweet recollections of God's goodness (*samarna*) are all evident."⁷⁹ The deity or avatar is not representative of the mythical time of original creation but interacts as an active agent in the life of the devotee. Additionally, "the divine was perceived as dwelling in the vicinity, not far removed

⁷⁸ Singh, Ravindra Raj. "The Pivotal Role of Bhakti in Indian World Views." *Diogenes*, vol. 39, no. 156, 1991, pp. 65-81. 66.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* 67.

either from individuals themselves or their world.”⁸⁰ The sacred is still differentiated from the profane but is not the sacred mythical time of creation; it is a more accessible form of linear sacred time that a religious person can interact with directly. This linear sacred time is experienced directly as *saguna Brahman* and the person having the experience does not experience eternal *nirguna Brahman*. This is opposite of circular sacred time where the intent is to pass through *saguna Brahman* in order to attain the experience of *nirguna Brahman*.

Sinah pointed out that in the *Bhagavad-gītā* “whenever dharma declined, and it became beyond the capacity of human beings to put it back on the high pedestal it ought to occupy. He [Krishna] would re-incarnate Himself for accomplishing this task for humanity.”⁸¹ The *Bhagavad-gītā*’s overall plot provides a model and historical example for such divine intervention and so linear sacred time could be encountered in several different ways through the *Bhagavad-gītā*. The *Rāmāyaṇa* serves a similar function which is identified at the beginning of the text: “In these very times, such a man was born into this world. His name is Rama.”⁸² The times referenced are those of the problems and chaos being caused by Ravana. The quality of human life and morality life is in jeopardy, so direct intervention in history by the divine is necessary to repair the balance. Through ritual and sacrifice, petitioners offer pleas to the god Brahma to intervene, stating “Father, we cannot bear Ravana’s tyranny anymore. His evil pervades

⁸⁰ Ibid. 67.

⁸¹ Sinah, B.M. "India Awaits Vishnu's Return." *Hinduism Today*, vol. 14, no. 1, 1992. 2.

⁸² Menon, Ramesh. *The Ramayana: a Modern Retelling*. Harper Collins and the India Today Group, 2005. 39.

earth and men's hearts are corrupted from afar."⁸³ Brahma states that he cannot help because of the promise that no immortal being can kill Ravana. Vishnu then enters the story and states that he will deliberately be born into a mortal avatar in order to kill the Ravana. Rama is then born as a mortal to a king and queen through divine intervention. This offers further evidence for recognizing the *Rāmāyaṇa* as distinct from the mythical time of creation or an "age of gold." The problems taking place in the world are part of history, and because of this, the divine must intervene in history to solve the problems.

This compares to some degree with God's decision in Christianity to have his mortal son, Jesus, be born into linear history in order to help humanity address problems of morality. Jesus fits with the conception of an avatar in Hinduism in the sense that his origin is in the sacred itself. This is evidenced in the following passage from the Biblical book of *John*: "And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world."⁸⁴ This shows that Jesus, while currently incarnated in a mortal form, is of divine origin. He embodies the sacred "irrupting" into profane history. God performed a miracle and intervened in history in order to have his son, Jesus, interact with the world and address the crisis of sin that humans were facing.⁸⁵ The life and works of Jesus then become models for human behavior, for example, the giving of alms can be viewed as a religious activity that recollects the sacrifice and gift of Jesus when he gave his life in order to enable the redemption of humanity. It is possible for such a practice to enable the participant to

⁸³ Ibid. 54.

⁸⁴ *John*. 6.38.

⁸⁵ This is a significant simplification of the history of Jesus and his role on Earth according to Christianity.

engage in the historical linear sacred time in which Jesus performed his own sacrifices for humanity. The religious individual does not return to an experience of the time of creation itself but to a specific point in linear history so such an experience would not qualify as circular sacred time.

Also, recall that Eliade regarded suffering from catastrophes in Judaism as being ascribed to God's wrath. According to Eliade, this has significant implications for sacred time in Judaism. "Thus, for the first time, the prophets placed a value on history, succeeded in transcending the traditional vision of the cycle ... and discovered a one-way time."⁸⁶ So for Eliade, due to the direct intervention of God in human history, and thereby in linear profane time, Judaism now finds itself disconnected from cyclical sacred time and "a one-way time" is established. Eliade continued noting "But, for the first time, we find affirmed, and increasingly accepted, the idea that historical events have a value in themselves, insofar as they are determined by the will of God."⁸⁷ Christianity then takes this conception of sacred time and history even further and continues to both valorize the role of history and to introduce additional instances where God intervenes directly in the profane linear historical timeline.⁸⁸ This once again parallels the crisis of morality and prayers for divine intervention that takes place in the events of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Bhagavad-gītā*, as well as in individual prayers for divine intervention by humans. The historical events recorded in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and

⁸⁶ Eliade, Mircea. *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper & Brothers, 1954. 104.

⁸⁷ Ibid. 104.

⁸⁸ Ibid. 104.

Bhagavad-gītā are not valued as archetypal models but irreversible crisis in history that needs to be addressed through the irruption of the sacred into profane history.

Additionally, we find devotion is incorporated into the liturgy of Judaism as a formal practice. For example, consider the *Amidah*, also known as “the standing prayer,” which is a prayer that is traditionally recited three times each day. The *Amidah* is a prayer traditionally made up of eighteen specific benedictions, although in most modern practice nineteen are invoked. When chanted in a congregation, some benedictions of the *Amidah* are chanted in unison, while others are read silently by the individual. There are three benedictions of praise to God, twelve or thirteen petitions to God, and three benedictions of thanks. The specific wording of each of the benedictions can vary depending on the time of year or season, or if the *Amidah* is being used for a specific festival. Individuals reciting the *Amidah* can enter into the experience of linear sacred time, because the majority of the benedictions are linked with events from history or events that have not yet occurred. For example, the second benediction known as *Geburot*,⁸⁹ (powers), focuses on offering praise to God for God’s works such as healing of the sick. An individual engaged with this benediction would be able to experience the sacred as linear sacred time since the benediction invokes recollections of God’s historical interventions into history. The seventh benediction, *Birkat ha-Ge’ullah*, (redemption), relates to God’s role in the redemption of the Israelites. The fifteenth benediction, *Et Zemah Dawid*, (Blessing of David), is a plea for God to bring the messiah

⁸⁹ Note that there are several alternative spellings used for the name of each benediction. I utilize the spellings found in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*.

into existence on earth, who will be a descendant of David. Again, a person engaged in this benediction would experience linear sacred time as the prayer connects to history and not to a mythical time of creation.⁹⁰ During the concluding meditation of the *Amidah*, some people may follow a traditional text, but others may personalize this part of the prayer and offer specific thanks, or pleas more closely related to their own life. This mirrors the way in which an individual practicing *bhakti* to Rama or Krishna might invoke the deity into direct interaction with their own life. The drawing together of the sacred and history means that this too can enable the experience of linear sacred time for the individual engaged in such prayer.

When *bhakti* is compared with some practices from the “modern” religion of Christianity, we find evidence to support that *bhakti* enables *homo religiosus* to experience linear sacred time. Consider the liturgy of supplication in Christianity. As part of supplication, the person is asking God to directly engage with his life by giving assistance, intervention, or simply having the presence of God during a religious event. An example of such supplication might be the *Litany of Fervent Supplication* in which the petitioner asks God for assistance to be given to specific people. For example, one might ask God to assist the victims of a hurricane to recover from the disaster. If we consider *Amidah* and these other examples in relation to *bhakti* in Hinduism it is clear

⁹⁰ To be fair, it is arguable that some of the benedictions could also enable the religious person to experience circular sacred time, for example, the third benediction, *Kedushshat ha-Shem*, (Sanctification of the Name) offers general praise to the holiness of God. Making a case for circular sacred time being present in Judaism is beyond the scope of this thesis, but I believe it would be a valid argument to pursue.

that there are striking parallels and Eliade was incorrect to argue that linear sacred time is not present in Hinduism.

McDermott and Polish also highlighted the commonalities between *bhakti* in Hinduism and devotion associated with *Psalms* in Judaism and Christianity. In summarizing the historical roots of *Psalms* McDermott and Polish noted that authorship of the *Book of Psalms* is attributed to King David in roughly 1000 BCE and that David was divinely inspired through dreams to write *Psalms*. They note that there is some question as to whether the entirety of *Psalms* was authored directly by David. However, despite this controversy, it is fair to say that *Psalms* were authored by a known historical person and considered a sacred text. The content of *Psalms* also includes historical accounts of David's life.⁹¹ Compare this to the authorship and history of both the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Both are historical texts about the interaction of the sacred and the profane. Neither takes place at a mythical time of origins; but in linear profane history, Eliade described sacred events taking place in history for Christianity and Judaism. If we compare the above description of the authorship of *Psalms* as divinely inspired with the following from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, it illustrates that both texts meet Eliade's criteria for linear sacred time – the sacred is expressed directly through history and not the mythical time of origins. The *Rāmāyaṇa* begins with a description of how Valmiki composed the *Rāmāyaṇa* stating that "The legend came to him as if he was

⁹¹ Polish, Daniel F and Rachel Fell McDermott. "Intimate Relations: Psalms and Bhakti Poetry." *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, vol. 50, no. 3, 2015, pp. 356-390. 358.

just an instrument and not the real power of another, far greater than himself.”⁹² The events of the text provide an account of history interwoven with the sacred.

Examining the scope of *bhakti* literature further illustrates that it can be read on two different levels, one “praising the *saguna* (with form) aspect of God—in other words, poetry that describes God in one of his or her anthropomorphic, named forms—and that praising the divine in a *nirguna* (formless) aspect”⁹³ So on one level both of these texts can be read in such a way as to invoke the experience of circular sacred time for the reader. Depending on the devotee’s intentionality, the texts can also invoke the experience of linear sacred time. If these texts are treated as models for human behavior wherein Rama or Arjuna stand as exemplary of man and the lessons they learn are those that all humans must learn in order to reach enlightenment, then the texts can establish the experience of circular sacred time for the reader. Yet, both of these texts function on a different level where devotees utilize the texts to invoke a sacred experience of Arjuna, Krishna or Rama’s actual historical lifetime.

The experience of the sacred through interaction with the text of *Psalms* is similar to that of interacting with epic poetry as *bhakti*. “The Psalms are about people’s reaching out to God, which is what we do experience, or what we *can* experience. The Psalms are a model for us of what our own relationship with God can be.”⁹⁴ This bears an arresting similarity to interacting with linear sacred time through the medium of

⁹² Menon, Ramesh. *The Ramayana: a Modern Retelling*. Harper Collins and the India Today Group, 2005. 47.

⁹³ Polish, Daniel F and Rachel Fell McDermott. "Intimate Relations: Psalms and Bhakti Poetry." *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, vol. 50, no. 3, 2015, pp. 356-390. 361.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

avatars and *saguna Brahman*. Note that McDermott and Polish used the phrase “what we *can* experience.” This shows that accessing and understanding the eternal timelessness reality of the divine may be beyond the scope or ability of a worshipper. Instead, he interacts with the sacred through the medium of history which is accessible to him. Linear sacred time is experienced because through devotion the individual develops a personal relationship with the deity and the sacred is intertwined with profane history. Interaction with the sacred takes place through both the history of the deities’ and avatars’ prior sacred interventions in linear time and also by seeking to have the deity interact directly the current life of the devotee.

Psalms contains many examples of requests to have God intervene directly in profane history. Some examples of this include: “This poor man cried, and the Lord heard *him*, and saved him out of all his troubles.”⁹⁵ “For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he as commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children.”⁹⁶ “He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel.”⁹⁷ “To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom.”⁹⁸ These are but a few examples of the many instances in *Psalms* where the devotee praises God, asks for mercy, for help or for intervention from God in profane time. Also in *Psalms*, devotees acknowledge the many works of God that have had a direct impact on history. This then supports Eliade’s

⁹⁵ *Psalms* 34.6..

⁹⁶ *Psalms* 78.5.

⁹⁷ *Psalms* 103-7.

⁹⁸ *Psalms* 14.12.

reading that God intervenes and works directly through linear history and to experience the sacred as part of history is a *theophany*. The sacred is experienced by the devotee as linear sacred time.

While McDermott and Polish offered comparison between *Psalms* and later *bhakti* poetry, similar examples of invocations to a deity are seen in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Bhagavad-gītā* (as well as earlier *Vedas*). Consider the following passage from the *Rāmāyaṇa*: Rama's mother is about to say goodbye, Rama rejects the opportunity to be crowned heir to his father's throne and instead leaves to begin his journey to defeat Ravana. She states "My noble child, may all heaven's blessings be upon you. ... May the Gods help you be as great a kind as all your ancestors."⁹⁹ Here his mother asks the gods to intervene in Rama's upcoming life events to help him be successful. She seeks a connection between the divine and history which establishes linear sacred time. Another character Bhagiratha offers *bhakti* to the god Sīva: "Bhagiratha turned in bhakti to the Lord Sīva, who is easily moved. When he had fasted in Sīva's name, living on just air for a year, the God of Gods appeared before the Ikshvaku King."¹⁰⁰ This exemplifies once more that in Hinduism a mortal person can, through *bhakti* invite the sacred into his life and interact with it in profane time with no connection to the time of origins.

⁹⁹ Menon, Ramesh. *The Ramayana: a Modern Retelling*. Harper Collins and the India Today Group, 2005. 88.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* 68.

4.4 Chapter Five Summary and Preview of Chapter Six

In this chapter, I began by providing an overview of Eliade's definition and understanding of linear sacred time and showed he denied the possibility of linear sacred time in Hinduism. Eliade's discussion of linear sacred time focused clearly on monotheistic traditions such as Christianity and Judaism. I then proceeded to evaluate the pre-classical, classical and post-classical periods in Hinduism and drew forth numerous examples that support my argument that linear sacred time does indeed exist in Hinduism.

In particular, the classical period, featuring the *Bhagavad-gītā* provides strong evidence that linear sacred time is evidenced in Hinduism. It exemplifies *Brahman* manifest in the material world and linear historical profane time. Eliade clearly stated that a religious person in Christianity participates in linear sacred time when involved in a rite related to the life of Christ. Therefore, it is clear that a religious person in Hinduism must also be participating in linear sacred time when participating in a rite related to the life of Krishna. The case of the avatar Rama in the *Rāmāyaṇa* reinforced this point yet again, especially given that the events reported in the *Rāmāyaṇa* take place during the *trētā yuga* when morality and profane time are degrading, so the events in the text are definitely not taking place during a mythical time of creation, but at a known point in linear profane history.

Additionally, utilizing the *Rāmāyaṇa* as an example, I discussed the role of *bhakti*, devotion, and the fact that individuals may practice various methods of *bhakti* where they deliberately invoke the deity into direct interaction with their lives in profane time. So both the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Bhagavad-gītā* illustrate two different ways in which linear sacred time can be experienced in Hinduism. *Theophanies* take place when deities in the form of avatars intervene directly in profane history which parallels Eliade's example of Jesus as a *theophany*. Secondly, this text also illustrates the principle of *bhakti* where through religious devotion, a person can seek to have the divine intervene directly in his own life. This was illustrated by the comparison between Epics.

Lastly, I wrapped this chapter up with a discussion of several examples of festivals and rituals in Hinduism. I compared the intentional experience of the sacred that a person participating in these rituals or festivals can undergo and compared it to similar examples from Christianity and Judaism. I found that while some rituals and festivals in Hinduism do enable the participant to experience circular sacred time, there are others that enable the participant to experience linear sacred time. Hinduism is different from Christianity in that religious persons can participate in linear *or* circular sacred time. The type of sacred time experienced is dependent upon whether they are participating in rites that connect them to an experience of the *illud tempus* as the origin of the universe or in a rite that connects them to the sacred history of a deity incarnated in the historical timeline. In the former, they would be participating in circular sacred

time while in the latter they would be participating in linear sacred time. Both, depending on context, are available to the religious person in Hinduism.

In chapter five I will present some possible counter-arguments that Eliade, or a scholar of his works, might make against my claim that both linear sacred time and circular sacred time are accessible to a religious individual participating in Hinduism. I will then defend my position against such possible counter arguments and in doing so further strengthen my own theory of linear sacred time in Hinduism. Possible criticisms of my theory center around Eliade's' conception of archetypes and his view of historical characters in epics. For the sake of clarity, I have named each of these possible counter arguments and will address each one in a separate section of chapter five.

CHAPTER 5. CRITICISMS AGAINST LINEAR SACRED TIME IN HINDUISM

5.1 Introduction

At this point, having offered ample evidence to support my claim that linear sacred time exists in Hinduism, it seems appropriate to consider how Eliade or scholars of his work might have responded to my claim and in particular my use of the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Rāmāyaṇa* as exemplary of linear sacred time in Hinduism. Therefore, in this chapter, I examine several possible counter arguments that Eliade might have made against my theory of linear sacred time in Hinduism. While there are some commonalities amongst these possible counter arguments to my theory, for the sake of clarity each argument is listed in a separate section of this chapter. I begin with the “Avatars as Archetypes Argument” argument in which, based on Eliade’s use of archetypes in sacred time, one might claim that avatars such as Krishna and Rama serve only as archetypical models for the sacred during the age of the Gods, and thus are not connected to linear sacred time. I then follow with a related argument which I term the “Historical Persons Celebrated in Epics Argument,” which is a variation

on the “Avatars as Archetypes Argument.” This argument addresses Eliade’s claim that “characters,” whether real people or fictional who appear in epics are merely archetypal models of human behavior and that their ties are to profane time and linear history. Lastly, I end with the “Age of Gold Argument” in which Eliade might have argued that my examples of linear sacred time in Hinduism are merely models for events that took place in what he termed the “age of gold” and therefore would not qualify as instances of linear sacred time.

5.2 Avatars as Archetypes Argument

In *Images and Symbols*, Eliade discussed his theory that deities and avatars function as archetypes for noting that any embodiment of the sacred as an avatar or God is in reality simply an archetype of the ultimate sacred. So it seems likely that Eliade would view Krishna or Rama as being mere archetypes of *Brahman*, a mode through which religious humans can connect to undifferentiated *Brahman* itself.

Regarding avatars, Eliade wrote that

“These “forms,” it is true, are not all spontaneous; not all of them depend directly upon the ideal archetype; a great many of them are “historical” in the sense that they result from the evolution or the imitation of a previously existing form.”¹

¹ Eliade, Mircea. *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism*. translated by Philip Mairet, Harvill Press, 1961. 118.

Eliade continued in this vein, noting that a goddess in an epic is not herself important but serves as a placeholder for “the Great Goddess.” The function of such a deity in an epic is not to connect the reader to the specific historical events that the deity participates in, but to connect the reader directly to the time of origins when the deity is regarded as an archetype.² Here, it would seem Eliade was attempting to connect avatars and deities such as Krishna and Rama to circular sacred time. In Eliade’s view, such entities are merely archetypes of *Brahman*, and thus a person who accesses the sacred through interaction with such deities, or through accounts of their deeds and histories, enters into an experience of circular sacred time. Eliade strips away the relevance of the avatars interaction with linear profane time and reduces them to mere placeholders for *nirguna Brahman*.

To refute Eliade’s view, I argue that when individuals interact with the *Bhagavad-gītā*, other sacred epics, the person is not performing an analysis of how the text serves as an archetype of the sacred time of creation. Instead, they are focused on analyzing the actions and words of historical characters in the *Bhagavad-gītā* in the context of how such actions took place in history. The time of origins is specifically limited to the creation of the world itself, and “heroes and ancestors” such as Krishna in the *Bhagavad-gītā* are incarnated into the historical linear timeline and quite separate from the time of origins. For example, Arjuna’s struggle to understand sacred concepts such as *ātman*, *Brahman* and *dharma* serves as a model for how readers of the *Bhagavad-gītā* might address their own daily struggles to address such concepts. Arjuna

² Ibid. 18.

serves as a model for behavior, and on one level a religious person can interact with him as an archetypical model for human behavior connected to the mythical time of creation. However, depending on the intention of the person who is interacting with the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Krishna can also be recognized as a historical individual from a specific point in linear profane time in the same way that the life of Jesus serves as a model for someone in Christianity. So festivals, rites or other sacred acts which celebrate such historical examples cannot establish circular sacred time. Instead, they establish linear sacred time. Eliade confused and complicated his theories by implying that epics are archetypical models that enable participation in circular sacred time. If the events in the epic do not take place in the time of origins but are regarded as part of history, then rituals related to that epic also establish linear sacred time that is grounded in history. I firmly disagree with Eliade and find this to be exemplary of the flaw in his theory; namely that archaic religions enable the experience of circular time while modern religions enable the experience of linear sacred time. As shown through my earlier comparison between avatars from Hinduism and the historical figure Jesus, when religious persons experience religious ritual associated with these historical figures a significant aspect of the rituals often focuses on events from that avatar or deity's linear historical life and bears no intentional connection to the time of origins.

I believe that Eliade created a grave inconsistency in his theory by claiming that epics such as the *Bhagavad-gītā* are merely retellings of archetypal mythical models of events from the time of origins. The *Bhagavad-gītā* more closely resembles the life of Jesus as an example of linear sacred time in Christianity than it resembles archetypes or

“mythical models” from the time of origins. If we fully adopt Eliade’s position that epics are simply archetypes, then what prevents us from claiming that the life of Jesus, Moses, and the battle between David and Goliath in Christianity are not also simply epics based on a mythical model? Eliade regarded those examples from Judaism and Christianity as taking place in linear history (as discussed earlier in this work), and thus, when religious individuals participate in rituals that reactualizes those historical events, they participate in linear sacred time. Regarding Judaism and God Eliade wrote that “His [God’s] gestures are *personal* interventions in history ...”³ and that by such personal interventions the *theophany* is established. Arguably the definition of an avatar in Hinduism is exactly that – a personal intervention in profane time by the divine in the form of an incarnated deity. As I discussed earlier, Vishnu ’s intervention in history via his avatar Krishna is a clear intervention in history and personally targeted toward the human Arjuna. The *Bhagavad-gītā* is regarded as a sacred text that elaborates historical events that took place in the history of India. Therefore, it would seem logical that an individual who participates in rituals that reactualize events recounted in the *Bhagavad-gītā* would also be participating in *linear* and *not circular* sacred time. I believe that Eliade lacked clear support to explain what differentiates epics about real historical persons from events in the lives of persons regarded as sacred such as Jesus in Christianity. Therefore, I believe that my argument that the *Bhagavad-gītā* exemplifies linear sacred time in Hinduism remains valid.

³ ---. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1957. 110-111.

In considering Eliade's own definitions of "myth," there is another argument that serves to defend my interpretation of the *Bhagavad-gītā* as enabling those who interact with it to the experience of linear sacred time. If Eliade's definitions of myth are compared to the content of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, then it seems that the *Bhagavad-gītā* does not qualify as a myth, and thus clearly does not meet Eliade's criteria for sacred experiences which enable participation in circular sacred time. Eliade defined myth as a description of events that took place "in the beginning," in a primordial and non-temporal instant, a moment of *sacred time*. ... myth is supposed to happen ... in a non-temporal time, in an instant without duration, as certain mystics and philosophers conceived of eternity."⁴ In his later work, *Myth and Reality*, Eliade defined myth as something that "narrates a sacred history; it relates to an event that took place in primordial Time, the fabled time of the 'beginnings.'"⁵ In other words, myth tells how, through the deeds of supernatural beings, reality came into existence, be it the whole of reality, the Cosmos, or only a fragment of reality—an island, a species of plant, a particular kind of human behavior, an institution. Myth, then as Eliade defined it, is always an account of a "creation" ... The actors in myth are supernatural beings. They are known primarily for what they did in the transcendent times of the "beginnings."⁶ Note that while Eliade did use the term "sacred history" in the first definition of myth, I believe that here he did not refer to linear profane history, but the time of origins itself.

⁴ ---. *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism*. translated by Philip Mairet, Harvill Press, 1961. 57.

⁵ ---. *Myth and Reality*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper & Row, 1963. 5.

⁶ *Ibid.* 5-6.

If we adopt Eliade's definition of myth⁷, then the epics such as the *Bhagavad-gītā* cannot qualify as myths since they take place in profane history and are not part of the primordial time of creation. The *Bhagavad-gītā* does not meet Eliade's definition of myth, which connects to circular sacred time, and thus, we must place epics such as the *Bhagavad-gītā* in a different category of sacred time. I believe that it, and other similar epics such as the *Rāmāyaṇa*, fall squarely into the category of linear sacred time. They are not fully profane as they have a clear link to the sacred and recount the interaction of deities incarnated in earthly forms with humans, yet they take place in a history. The individuals who are reciting, or listening to a myth enter into a direct experience of the sacred which transcends the profane time in which they normally live. Because the events in the *Bhagavad-gītā* take place in profane history, not primordial time, they do not enable the listener to experience circular sacred time. Instead, the listener can enter into the conscious experience of linear sacred time wherein sacred events from history are made present.

⁷ Please note that there are a number of different definitions of "myth," which I will not enter into here. Eliade's definition is regarded by some scholars as controversial. Given that my project focuses on inconsistencies and incompleteness in Eliade's own theory, I will not quibble with his definition of myth at this time. Instead, I show that his own definition of myth creates inconsistencies within his own theory. To evaluate his definition of myth is beyond the scope of this project.

5.3 Historical Persons Celebrated in Epics Argument

In *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*, Eliade stated that there are real historical figures that are “metamorphosed” into mythical heroes. In this context, he discussed several examples of historical figures from Yugoslavian epic poetry and stories from Russia where there is sound historical evidence that the person valorized in the epic did exist, thus clearly linking them to the profane historical timeline.⁸ Eliade stated:

To repeat, the historical character of the persons celebrated in epic poetry is not in question. But their historicity does not long resist the corrosive action of mythicization. The historical event in itself, however important, does not remain in the popular memory, nor does its recollection kindle the poetic imagination save insofar as the particular historical event closely approaches a mythical model.⁹

Here Eliade seemed to imply that although an epic might include historical persons as characters, he regarded this as unimportant since the events that took place in the epic are treated as a myth by those who read or recount the epic. In the same vein, Eliade also theorized that epics, even if they did not take place at the time of creation, were merely stories modeled on archetypical events that *did* take place at the time of creation. For instance, an epic that recounts the battle between two

⁸ Eliade, Mircea. *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper & Brothers, 1954. 41-42.

⁹ *Ibid.* 42.

warriors is not sacred because it recounts that specific battle. Instead, it is sacred because it is modeled on the archetype of those that took place between the gods at the time of creation.¹⁰ Thus, Eliade felt epics enabled those reading them to access circular sacred time because the epic was really about the archetype of the *first* battle or some other first event from the time of origins.¹¹

On the surface, the above passages from Eliade would seem to pose a problem for my claim that linear sacred time exists in Hinduism through examples such as *The Bhagavad-gītā* and *Rāmāyaṇa*. After all, Krishna and Rama could both be regarded as a “person celebrated in epic poetry” and one might argue that the events that take place in the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Rāmāyaṇa* are simply retellings of an earlier mythical model (or multiple mythical models). The *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Rāmāyaṇa* are both poetic epics and are treated as literature instead of sacred texts by some readers.

However, I argue that my examples in this chapter do not fall prey to Eliade’s definition of mythicization and do not represent a return to the time of origins or circular sacred time. Allen noted that Eliade seemed to posit something of a “reverse incarnational movement”¹² where all religious experiences or expressions seek to return to the ultimate archetype of that experience from the mythical time of creation.¹³ Allen also pointed out that for Eliade, the *Bhagavad-gītā* serves as a lesson on how the idealized archetype of a human person (Arjuna) seeking to return to a pure existence of

¹⁰ Ibid. 43.

¹¹ Ibid. 43.

¹² Allen, Douglas. "Eliade and History." *The Journal of Religion*, vol. 68, no. 4, 1988, pp. 545-565. 560.

¹³ Ibid. 560.

union with *Brahman* and spiritual enlightenment. Thus Eliade might have argued that Arjuna functions as a “person celebrated in epic poetry” wherein Arjuna’s actual historical life had no sacred meaning. He is merely a placeholder, an archetype for the path to liberation where there is no suffering or linear profane time. In *Cosmos and History*, Eliade described the *Bhagavad-gītā* as having a complex relationship with history and that “the recollection of a historical event or a real personage survives in popular memory for two or three centuries at the utmost ...”¹⁴ and so the actual life history of the person is lost and the person becomes merely an archetypal character. “If certain epic poems preserve what is called “historical truth,” this truth almost never has to do with definite persons and events, but with institutions, customs, landscapes.”¹⁵ Later on, Eliade also indicated that this same transition from historical person to archetypal character also takes place with the worship of ancestors.¹⁶

I do not discount Eliade’s view on this matter in its entirety, since as shown earlier in chapter three, there are portions of the *Bhagavad-gītā* which do connect a person interacting with this text to circular sacred time. However, I argue that not *all* events in the *Bhagavad-gītā* automatically transform into archetypes. Many still have direct historical bearing and thus can also connect a person interacting with this, or other sacred epics in Hinduism, to the experience of linear sacred time. Recall that as *itihāsa*, both the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Rāmāyaṇa* are deemed to be histories of actual

¹⁴ Eliade, Mircea. *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper & Brothers, 1954. 43.

¹⁵ Ibid. 43.

¹⁶ Ibid. 46-47.

events that occurred in Hinduism. As such they are viewed not as religiously treated as mythical models and archetypes but as accounts of actual events as they happened in the linear profane timeline. While it is true that both texts can, and are, used as teaching tools for religious principles tied to the time of origins, the historical events described by the epics themselves important and the works are regarded as accounts of genuine history. As *itihāsa*, these two works are resistant to the “corrosive action of mythicization ...”¹⁷ which Eliade believed to corrupt epic poetry in general. Simply that these works take the form of epic poetry is not a sufficient argument to prove that they automatically link to the time of origins as archetypes of mythical models.

5.4 Age of Gold Argument

Lastly, I will briefly address one more possible avenue of criticism against my theory of linear sacred time in Hinduism. Eliade, or a scholar of his work, might contradict my claim that the *Bhagavad-gītā* exemplifies linear sacred time by arguing that the events in the *Bhagavad-gītā* take place in an “age of gold” and are thus part of circular sacred time. Recall, as I discussed in section 3.4.3, that for Eliade the “age of gold” represents the time of idealized, utopian society that is not part of the time of creation, but takes place shortly after the time of creation. It is a time that describes a world of deities and supernatural beings and a myth that recounts events from an “age of gold” establishes circular sacred time. A myth that recounts events from the “age of

¹⁷ Ibid. 42.

gold” does not recount events that took place profane linear history. It instead describes a mythical time centered on the gods themselves and not humans. However, given that the *Bhagavad-gītā* contains both deities incarnated in human form, humans and many instances of war and conflict it seems that the *Bhagavad-gītā* could not qualify as taking place in an “age of gold” adjacent to the time of creation. The conflict and war mean that it is not an account a utopian society. Therefore, it is not valid to claim that the *Bhagavad-gītā* establishes circular sacred time because it mythic account of an “age of gold.”

Again, the same reasoning can be used to show that the *Rāmāyaṇa* does not qualify as a mythic story of the “age of gold.” The events of the *Rāmāyaṇa* take place in the *treta yuga* during which time decays and evil enters the world so it does not describe a utopian society. The epic addresses evil and strife which contradict the idealized and utopic qualities that Eliade attributed to “the age of gold.” Again, avatars are incarnated in human form and into profane history, so the *Rāmāyaṇa* does not describe a mythic time in an “age of gold.”

5.5 Chapter Summary and Preview of Chapter Six

In the preceding sections of chapter five, I have raised and responded to several possible arguments against my theory of linear sacred time in Hinduism. Each of these arguments related in some way to Eliade's definition of archetypes and his conception of the mythical time of creation.

First, I addressed what I termed the "Avatars are Archetypes Argument" wherein a critic might argue that avatars represent archetypical models for deities from the mythical original time of creation. I responded to this argument by indicating that neither Arjuna or Rama, when functioning as avatars in sacred texts are regarded as taking a direct part in the events of profane history in the same way that Eliade argued Christ does in Christianity. I also noted that neither the *Bhagavad-gītā* nor the *Rāmāyaṇa* fits Eliade's definition of myth. Because of these two factors, I argue that instances of avatars incarnated in profane linear history can enable the experience of linear sacred time.

Secondly, I addressed what I named the "Historical Persons Celebrated in Epics Argument" which addresses Eliade's claim that even if persons celebrated in epics are known historical persons, over time the value of history in their story is lost and they are transformed into mythical archetypes. I response this by pointing out that events in the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Rāmāyaṇa* are *itihāsa*, meaning that they are histories and are not treated as fictionalized accounts or mythical models.

Lastly, I addressed what I termed the “Age of Gold Argument.” In this case, a critic of my theory might bring up Eliade’s description of the “age of gold” as an idealized mythical model from the time of origins and then argue that the *Bhagavad-gītā* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* are not historically grounded, but are fictionalized accounts of events that took place in the “age of gold.” I refuted this argument by pointing out that there is decisive evidence that the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Rāmāyaṇa* are both considered to be accounts of historical events from the history of India and as such cannot be labeled as stories of the “age of gold.”

Now, having presented my thesis in detail and having addressed several possible criticisms of my arguments, I will conclude with a brief summation of my arguments in chapter six.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

At this point, it seems fitting to conclude with a summation of my arguments in this thesis. My central argument is that phenomenologically an individual who intentionally participates in a religious experience within Hinduism can either have a conscious experience of circular sacred time or linear sacred time depending on the context of the experience. My argument reveals that there are inconsistencies with Eliade's claim that *all* sacred time in archaic religions, such as Hinduism, is circular sacred time. I argue that a religious person in Hinduism can experience circular sacred time in the way that Eliade described, *or* can also have experiences of the linear sacred time that Eliade attributed only to “modern” religions such as Christianity and Judaism.

I began by establishing my phenomenological methodology for this project in chapter one, and then in chapter two clearly established the fundamental differences between the sacred and the profane, as defined by Eliade. The profane is the lived time that humans experience as part of day to day lives. It is time though which history exists and, as it is most typically understood, proceeds in a linear fashion where the present time becomes the past and we anticipate the future that is yet to come. Profane time can be described as both objective and subjective. This depends on a person's perception that the passage of profane time might feel faster or slower than

the actual scientific progression of profane time on a clock. However, within that subjectivity, there is nothing sacred – our mind has a lived experience of time that may not match profane external time. In contrast, sacred time is established in the consciousness of an individual through direct intention to participate in the sacred. A person will be still experiencing profane time on one level, for example, his body continues to age, while simultaneously he is having a conscious experience of the sacred. Eliade argued that the sacred is revealed through the profane in the *coincidentia oppositorum* wherein a physical object, ritual, meditation, etc. existing in profane time takes serves as a key or pathway that allows the sacred to emerge. The *hierophany* takes place wherein the religious person consciously experiences the *original* time in which the sacred event being commemorated by the ritual took place. In the *hierophany* this original time is the mystical origin of the universe, the *illud tempus* of creation.

In circular sacred time, a person experiences the *illud tempus* or mythical time of creation in which the universe came into existence. Eliade was very clear, that to qualify as circular sacred time, the experience cannot be of an event that took place in the linear, profane historical time, but must be an event from the mythical, primordial time of creation. Through the medium of the profane, the sacred can be revealed. A person who engages in rituals, festivals or other activities which mimic archetypes of events that took place in the mythical time of creation can enter into an experience of that exact original moment of creation. Eliade argued that this is the most authentic way to live and that persons who strive to experience circular sacred time have a superior

understanding of the sacred, the origin of the universe and their place in it. When an individual experiences circular sacred time they recognize the homogeneity of events and that events in profane time are attempts to recreate archetypical gestures from the time of origins.

In contrast to the circular sacred time of archaic religions, Eliade claimed that “modern” religions such as Judaism and Christianity experience a *theophany* instead of a *hierophany*. While Eliade himself did not use the phrase “linear sacred time” I chose to introduce the term to describe the type of sacred time he attributed to these “modern” religions. According to Eliade, sacred events in Judaism and Christianity, including the time of creation itself, take place in linear profane time – in other words, they take place in history. Because the sacred manifests in history, a religious individual in these religions who experiences sacred time cannot experience circular sacred time. A *theophany* takes place instead of a *hierophany*. The *theophany* is still an experience of the sacred, but instead of consciously experiencing events from the mythical time of creation, a person who experiences a *theophany* experiences the historical time in which the sacred event occurred. For example, if an individual is participating in a ritual that commemorates some part of the life of Christ, “he recovers the *illud tempus* in which Christ lived, suffered, and rose again—but it is no longer a mythical time.”¹ Linear sacred time is focused on the heterogeneity of sacred events that took place in linear

¹ ---. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. translated by Willard R. Trask, Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1957. 111-112.

profane history, and are not homogenous with events from the mythical time of creation.

In chapter three I offered a detailed explanation of Eliade's conception of circular sacred time and supporting evidence to show that he was correct that circular sacred time exists in Hinduism in both the *Vedas*, the *Upaniṣads*, the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and lastly in the Advaita Vedānta school of Hinduism. In particular, I highlighted that *nirguna Brahman* is eternal and undifferentiated. In contrast, *saguna Brahman* is differentiated and with qualities. *Saguna Brahman* includes the concept of time itself, deities, *ātman* and the phenomenal world.

Then in chapter four, I formalized my argument that Eliade faced a serious inconsistency in his theory when he attributed linear sacred time and the *theophany* exclusively to "modern" religions. I examined passages from the early *Vedas* and from the Upanishads that revealed instances where a deity directly interacted with linear profane time in the same way that sacred events in Christianity and Judaism do. Then I delved into both the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Rāmāyaṇa* from the classical period and showed that both of these texts offer multiple avenues to support my argument that linear sacred time exists in Hinduism. Both of these sacred texts are *itihāsa* which is "history" and are accounts of historical events and not events from the mythical time of original creation. This rules them out as being instances of circular sacred time. Also, in discussing the *Bhagavad-gītā*, I noted that avatars such as Krishna intervene directly in linear history and through their actions, the divine is located in history in much the same

way that Eliade believed the divine establishes the *theophany* of history in Judaism and Christianity.

Also in chapter four, I argued that those who interact with the *Bhagavad-gītā* or *Rāmāyaṇa* can engage in the practice of *bhakti*, or devotion to a deity. Such devotion typically involves the religious person directing prayers, sacrifices and other religious activities. Often these activities have a goal of inviting the deity to interact with the petitioner's life. These two epics from Hinduism both exemplify *bhakti* in historical context as people and avatars from the texts engage in *bhakti*. Also, religious persons who interact with these texts often use them as a model and inspiration for *bhakti* practices toward Rama, Krishna and by extension Vishnu. To extend this argument further, I engaged in analysis of similarities between Eliade's examples of linear sacred time in Christianity and the activities and interventions of avatars in history. In addition, because these various examples of *bhakti* all illustrate engagement by mortals with the sacred through the medium of history, this provides additional evidence to support linear sacred time in Hinduism. By comparing Eliade's examples of devotion in Christianity and Judaism which establish linear sacred time and by discussing *bhakti* I reinforced my central argument. In short, while Eliade's claim that circular time exists in Hinduism is valid, he was fundamentally incorrect to say that *only* circular sacred time is present in Hinduism.

Lastly, in chapter five I addressed several possible counter arguments that Eliade or a scholar of his work might make against my argument about linear sacred time in Hinduism. I described the first possible criticism of my thesis as the "Avatars as

Archetypes Argument". Eliade regarded avatars in Hinduism as mere placeholders or archetypes for deities from the mythical time of creation and as such thought that they related to circular sacred time. I refuted this argument by showing that avatars are embedded in linear history. Eliade wrote "His [God's] gestures are *personal* interventions in history ..." ² in Christianity and this established a *theophany*. The role of avatars in Hinduism is exactly that – direct interactions in linear history and therefore they too must establish linear sacred time and can't be regarded as mere archetypes. I also showed that sacred epics such as the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Rāmāyaṇa* do not meet Eliade's definition of mythic and therefore cannot be regarded as archetypal stories. I termed the second possible criticism of my theory the "Historical Persons Celebrated in History Argument." In brief, Eliade did not deny that historical persons celebrated in epic poetry were real people, but he thought that over time those who engaged with the epic poetry disregarded the historical aspect and focused on the archetypal events taking place in the story. I countered this claim by showing that as *itihāsa*, sacred epics in Hinduism are viewed as history and the deep connection between events in the texts and direct intervention of the divine in the profane linear timeline is not lost, forgotten, or ignored by religious persons who interact with the texts. Lastly, I briefly addressed the "Age of Gold Argument" in which Eliade claimed that some religious stories describe events that took place in an "age of gold" which was an idealized, utopian world that existed just after the time of creation and could also enable the experience of circular sacred time. I refuted this by showing that the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Rāmāyaṇa* do not

² Ibid. 110-111.

meet his criteria for the “age of gold” and therefore are not reflective of circular sacred time.

In the course of this dissertation, I have shown that a religious individual in Hinduism can experience instances of both circular sacred time and linear sacred time which proves that the experience of linear sacred time is not is not exclusive to “modern” religions such as Christianity and Judaism.

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2011-2015	Faculty Advisor to Philosophy Club

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2014-2015	Faculty Senate Online Education Committee, Member
2013-2015	Freshman Learning Communities Advisory Board Member
2011-2015	Assessment Council, Member
2012-2015	New Student Orientation – Presenter at Parent Session
2014	Freshman Learning Communities Revision Committee, Member
2013 & 2015	New Media Faculty Search Committee, Member
2010-2011	Faculty Senate Development and Grant Committee, Member

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2009-2010	Graduate Representative
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PUBLICATIONS, PRESENTATIONS & PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

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2015	Conference Presentation – Use of Student Response Clickers and Team Based Learning in Freshman Learning Communities – Midwest Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Conference
2014 & 2015	Presenter, Faculty Workshop on Assessment and Writing Objectives – Indiana University Kokomo
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2011-present	Merlot.org - Certified Peer Reviewer & Member
2012	Advisor for revisions on a new edition of <i>Hindu Religions Traditions</i> by Hopkins for Wadsworth Publishing.

- 2011 Advisor for revision on new edition of *Japanese Religions* by Bryon Earhart for Wadsworth Publishing.
- 2011 Commentator for Pearson Publishing's MyPhilosophyLab and MyEthicsLab online sites for integrating textbooks with digital learning environments.
- 2010 Book Review: *Introducing Chinese Religions* by Mario Poceski. *China Review International*. 16.1

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- Metaethics: Heroes & Villains, Good & Evil - PHIL P383 topics course (Spring 2014 w/Honors section)
- Moral Problems: Love, Friendship & Relationships - PHIL P342 (Fall 2010, Fall 2012 w/Honors section)
- Phenomenology & Existentialism - PHIL P335 (Spring 2013 w/Honors section)
- Philosophy of Human Nature - PHIL P383 topics course (Fall 2011)
- Philosophy of Law - PHIL P375 (Spring 2012)
- Power, Madness & Identity in Foucault & Nietzsche - PHIL P383 (Spring 2015 w/Honors section)
- Social Political Philosophy - PHIL P345 (Fall 2014 w/Honors section)
- Introduction to Ethics - PHIL P140 (multiple semesters, including Fall, Spring, Summer 4 week, Summer 6 week and Honors sections)
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- 2011-2015 Center for Teaching Learning and Assessment Workshops
- Participated in a number of professional workshops offered to faculty members, including but not limited to: Canvas, Wiki's & Blogs, Adobe Connect, Merlot.org, SoftChalk, Editing Individual Webpages, Oncourse Modules, Team Based Learning, Working with Students needing Accommodations, WEAVE assessment technology, multiple different diversity modules and more. A complete list is available on request.
- 2012 IU Kokomo Faculty Learning Community: Yearlong learning community exploring integration of learner centered teaching in the classroom.
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- 2011 Working Sensitively and Responsibly with Troubled Students
- At Purdue University*
- 2008-2009 Purdue University Center for Instructional Excellence Workshops:
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