

FINAL DEBATE

ANATI: After a week of work we are approaching the end of this Symposium. Four main themes have been proposed for general discussion, and have been debated already in the respective commissions. The co-ordinators of these four commissions will bring us the results of their work and we can then further discuss the topics. The four themes are: The Role of Myths and Rites in Ethnology, co-ordinated by Ries; The Earliest Manifestation of Religious Activity, co-ordinated by Brockway; Problems of Methodology, co-ordinated by Beltran; and finally, The Definition of Religion, co-ordinated by Oosthuizen. Following this, we will have the closing session and the decisions taken by the committees and commissions during the Symposium will be read and discussed. Because of the decisions to be taken, this closing session will be considered as a general assembly of IASPER.

*Commission I:
The role of myths
and rites in ethnology*

RIES: After the work of the commission, to open this debate I should like to ask Madame Makarius to give us her opinion on the subject.

MAKARIUS L.: Certain myths may derive from a contradictory situation: the need to express something that, for various reasons, cannot be clearly stated. The myth overcomes this contradiction by means of a story being worked out – so that what cannot be clearly expressed is disguised: it is both revealed and concealed. The thing which cannot be stated is generally a breach of a prohibition, thus a crime or sin. Breaches of prohibitions are ritual means ensuring success in an enterprise, at the cost of sinful act, usually incest or murder. One of the best-known examples is that of the hunter of Madagascar, who commits incest before hunting in order to increase his luck. The language of myth is thus a hidden language. This occurs especially in «seeking» myths, such as that of Orpheus seeking Eurydice or Demeter seeking Proserpine. It is probable that the person desperately seeking another is the same person that has previously killed the sought person in a violating sacrifice. Orpheus invents music and Demeter gives corn to mankind. We can also recall Agamemnon sacrificing Iphigenia to be granted a good wind for Troy. A myth of the Menomini of North America describes the search of a character named Manabozo - who is a trickster for his young brother who is lost and is mysteriously drowned. Manabozo is given the secret of the Midewiwin ceremony and its medicines by the Higher Beings. The myth also tells that to be received by the Higher Beings, Manabozo has to pass a curtain, and the curtain is made of his brother's skin. «His fear faltered, but he entered». So the myth also creates revealing symbols. That the myth speaks in a disguised language creates its significance and effectiveness.

RIES:

Rites comprise acts and gestures that re- evoke mythical events. Therefore the meaning of the rite is to be found in the myth constituting the «sacred tale». All rites require an explanation in connection with a religious idea, or a «doctrine» which we find in myths. Myths are a language. In order to understand the myth itself it is necessary to build up a grammar allowing us to understand the mythical language. A «grammar» of this kind will need interdisciplinary cooperation. In this case too we have to refrain from ideological or philosophical interference. An interesting attempt at forming a structural grammar of the myth was made by Claude Lévi-Strauss. The grammar was based on the model provided by structural linguistics. At this point the work of the historian of religions begins. He must define the phenomenology of the myth by decoding the symbolic language and revealing its message. Myth is a message influencing the behaviour of *Homo Religiosus*.

MAKARIUS R.:

The ethnologist can only, when cooperating with the historian of religions, bring a partial contribution to the studies of primitive societies. These societies are dominated by concepts of magic rather than by religious concepts. During the development of the societies, given magical practices acquire a religious content. At this point we enter the field of history of religions. It appears to me that this meeting point for ethnologists and historians of religions, i.e. the stage in which societies move from a magic phase to a religious phase brings us back to the distinction made by Frazer between magic and religion which has been criticized, but I believe it to be still important as it gives an operative mode of distinction. For example, sacrifice to obtain a direct reward is a magic practice; in religion the same is done, not to obtain a direct effect but by means of intermediaries, the gods. The sacrifice is considered to give pleasure to the deity. The god is attributed a savage nature if he enjoys the suffering of the sacrificed animal or person. If the god is attributed the desire to receive a sacrifice the reason is that the sacrifice itself derives from an earlier stage, that of magic.

RIES:

The cooperation between ethnologists and historians of religions is extremely useful. As concerns the distinction between magic and religion, I think this falls into another category whose debate will be chaired by Prof. Oosthuizen.

HVITDFELDT:

It may be ambiguous to use the word «magic» in connection with a primitive religion because it is problematic to distinguish between magic and religion. Magic has a devaluating connotation in the European tradition. If as a part of religion a person drinks wine, we call it religion for christianity but magic for tribal religion. Ritual is more stabilized. Ritual is considered as a primary phenomenon, whereas myths are accessory, although it could be the other way around.

Rituals have to be explained for those who do not understand them. We know the same ritual may be explained in different ways by different people at the same time, or in different times by the same people. Methodologically it is safer to start from the rituals than from the explanations. And we must look at the ritual objectively. The people carrying out the ritual will always give an explanation of what they are doing; but this does not mean we should start from the myth in order to obtain an explanation. We are not able seriously to interpret the numerous religions existing all over the world. If we have to explain prehistoric religions it is not useful to start from known myths; it would be more rewarding to start from the actual rituals and practices.

OOSTHUIZEN:

We all make use of magic. Even going to church may be magical behaviour, if it is done to influence God or to obtain something. Magic is something in which one tries to get something from the supernatural. There are also people who use their own magic to subject other people. This is a different case from that of a prophet; the prophet subjects himself completely. I think this a distinction to be made. In magic and in primitive religion your power is put into action and the deities or the ancestors must respond to that power and answer your desires.

*Commission II :
Origins and earliest
expressions of religion*

BROCKWAY:

In order to open the debate on the oldest manifestations of religion, I should like to ask Dr. Cairns to make some comments concerning models for the religion of early man.

CAIRNS:

After discussion in our commission, we would prefer not to use the term «earliest manifestations of religion», but rather go back to the words «origins and earliest expressions of

religion». Still, the main force of our discussion was that we need careful methodology. We like the word «origin» because probably both people of science and religion do believe that there must be some roots, somewhere; we would like to use the word «model» to suggest a number of factors, one of which is the need for humility on the part of scholars and students.

Nobody can actually go back to the times where the earliest expressions of religion were manifested, so we need models to put together the actual empirical data from archaeology: just hypotheses to be tested at every stage. We need models when we are thinking about the possibility of continuity between present so-called «primitive» religions and the pre-historic religions. The arguments from continuity and from antiquity, and the arguments from complexity of present-day religion must be carefully looked at as models. A multifaceted approach is needed: if we did have a model of earliest religions it would be one with many subsets. We need interpretations from various sciences and studies, ethnology, sociology and psychology, which must all be equally tested. We must remember that we are limited by the scarcity of data.

ANATI:

We are limited by this need of looking for general models. Classifications in terms of phenomenology may lead to understanding when they are not artificially built up. However we are as yet far from being able to figure out models for every rational and irrational act of man.

CAIRNS:

In the model we look for the motivations for religion, we want to come up with an agreement as to what the constituents of earliest religion would be. The model would be comparable to other models, such as the model of the supernatural and the natural. In our model one looks at religion as having to do with the mind and the search for equilibrium in life. There must be in the human mind the capacity for imagination in order to have religion as well as social conditioning and the individual and corporate knowledge of what is not true.

Religion would be both irrational and rational by any definition. The whole matter of method and content in the study of early religion should be viewed through a model.

ANATI:

«Models», reflect our thinking. Even this term might have been quite different in other cultural context.

MAKARIUS L.:

As premise to an ethnological discussion, it is useful to recall the fact that in ethnology one must always bear in mind the special nature of primitive thought.

ANATI:

Are we to consider that all the so-called «primitive people» reasoned in a standard way which is defined «the special nature of primitive thought»? Are we to consider that we, «Europeans» or «civilized» think in one way and all the other populations of the world in another way? Is it possible to generalize to such an extent?

MAKARIUS L.:

Clearly when I refer to «primitive» thought or societies I have no biological positivism in mind. I intend to speak of the «primitive» character of the material infrastructure of these societies. An infrastructure made up by hunting and fishing, and even rudimentary agriculture, is «primitive» compared to subsequent developments, and the relative culture will also be «primitive».

This culture may be called «magical», because it is formed by a mode of thought which mingles the subject with the object, desire with reality, and feared danger with real danger. This is in fact the same way we think when, under the influence of a strong emotion, we evade the habitual rationalist censoring. Let us take the example of the psychological attitude concerning cancer: we dare not pronounce the word.

Another example is the fact that we cannot bear to see the photograph of a person dear to us being torn to pieces. The torn picture evokes a broken and torn face. We have the feeling that the same thing that happens to the photograph may happen to the person. Our reason does not accept this possibility but our psyche does. This is in fact the origin of the superstition surrounding a mirror being broken.

We can also think of the participation taking place when a country wins at football game. The citizen who becomes excited over this has nothing in common with the players, he has no personal relationship with them, he is not at all affected by what happens to them. Nonetheless their victory appears to him as being his too. The same goes for all modern societies, which seem to be far from primitive culture. We can realize what «magical thought» means when we think of what happens to us when excited or anxious.

Therefore this is the kind of thought to which we have to refer to understand ethnological phenomena. For example, the ideas surrounding red ochre can be explained by the fact that it is red and this colour is associated with blood and often menstrual blood.

This is also a kind of thought structure that gives rise to taboos. Taboos are the basis of primitive social organization and also are of primordial importance in religions.

BROCKWAY:

Before going on to another side of this complex topic could we have some reactions to Dr. Cairn's comments and then to what Madame Makarius said?

BARKER:

I'm not sure whether I am proposing a model or dissociating myself entirely from the notion of models. I feel that my archeologically uninformed paper has received much support. My main point was the great importance of looking at the image of the animal, and its connection with extant animals, and rites and religion we now know of. At some point, certainly seen in creation myths of the world, man knew he had a life, which means he knew he was going to die. I can contend that every picture man ever made was religious, if religion is the awareness of life and therefore the choices one makes have a moral context. This awareness was a great triumph and a great loss. All over the world we find the story of the fall of man; it seems to be a fall into consciousness. Every scratch on every rock is a representation of this self-consciousness, because animals, as far as we know, do not represent themselves. This, I believe, is the content of the rituals we know of, such as the New Year ritual in which the beast becomes the master. The beast-mask and beast images signify a return to the state preceding this self-awareness. In many cases sacrifice is connected with the fact that winter precedes spring, that there is a price to every rebirth. Death precedes rebirth and this is something that precedes the idea of after-life. You die over and over again in your life. There is great death in the transit from childhood to parenthood, and the myth we know in this case is the trip to the underworld, the trip to the world of ancestors. And there is the other aspect of the animal; the animal who is your friend, who knows you, is shaped by man.

RIES:

I prefer to speak about the first manifestations of religion rather than the «origin» of religion. If we speak of origins we go beyond the field of our specific investigation as historians of religions. Religious philosophy and theology discuss the problem of the origin of religion. This is not a problem pertaining to the field of the historians of religions. We should refer to religious expressions. These expressions are being gradually understood thanks to the co-operation of prehistorians, art historians, psychologists, ethnologists, archeologists and historians of religions. The historian of religions is in a position to supply the criteria and scale of values for the definition of a religious phenomenon. Here we come back to the distinction between religion and magic.

An act is magic, when the person carrying it out uses mysterious forces in view of an immediate result, and this has no relation with a transcendent world. An act is religious when it is the act of a man whose idea of the world leads him into contact with a world which is no longer profane. Such a man is convinced that there is another world from the one in which he leads his daily life. This man believes in sacredness and his act depends on this belief. In other words, the acts of religious man are carried out in relation to hierophanic activity. It is this hierophanic criterion which will allow us to distinguish religious acts.

CIUGUDEAN:

I can't agree with the opinion of Dr. Schwarz that religion appeared when man delegated his power and thoughts to a specialized figure such a sorcerer or a priest.

All of us believe that to-day man is less religious than he was in previous times. The explanation of this will help us to find a way to the origin of religion and to establish the period of its appearance.

At the time when prehistoric man became a conscious being, he felt himself completely dominated. He saw powerful forces (natural phenomena, animals etc.) which he was not able to control and to defeat with his own powers. So he was forced to find psychological help, which in his mind was also physical. The world of prehistoric man was dominated by supernatural powers, so it was also dominated by religion. But religion means a complex structure, a real ideological system. For this reason, as Prof. Ries said, it is better to talk about the origins of religious thought and manifestations, because they may precede religion itself.

In conclusion: the appearance of religious manifestations must be situated at the moment when man became a conscious being. At the same time he became conscious that he was weak, dominated by gigantic forces and so some kind of «religious» feelings appeared in his mind. These «religious» feelings must have been accompanied by some religious manifestations, and these only later became a true, well-structured religion, with myths, rules, practices and specialized persons.

I also doubt that from an archaeological point of view these first manifestations may ever be found.

OOSTHUIZEN:

I agree as far as the awareness of man's limitations is concerned. There is no other being as aware of his limitations. Despite his success, man feels himself limited and strives continually to overcome his limitations. We should look for religion right there. Whether it was put there or developed is another question.

*Commission III:
Methodology*

BELTRAN:

Some of the methods applied by prehistorians derive from ethnology or ethnography and from theories from the 19th century and onward, which approached the problem of methodology as if everything were completely clear.

For Palaeolithic art we still depend to a large extent on the work of Breuil, who studied Altamira at a time when practically only Altamira was known. If we are lucky enough to have prehistorians who come from the field of ethnology such as Prof. Léroï-Gourhan, if we recognize the methodological faults of the work carried out by prehistorians basing themselves on Tylor's evolutionary theories, perhaps we can reach a point where we have more facts than theory and the required analysis is made before any synthesis. Therefore it is extremely important to find methods for the art and religion of prehistoric man deriving jointly from various disciplines: ethnology, history of religions, history of art, psychology, and, of course, prehistory.

Practically we will have types of work pertaining specifically to the prehistorian. There will be others straddling the field of prehistory, and yet others from which the prehistorian will only be able to derive new methodological knowledge. If we looked at the methods from prehistory alone we would not be having an interdisciplinary symposium.

So I shall not speak of archaeological excavations and of the organization of records associated with rock art. These are problems of the prehistorian who will have to add to these notions concerning the society of the men who made the art. From the point of view of rock art all the methods are valid as long as they are accurate and concretely useful with respect to the study.

Naturally we will have all the theories of culture for general methods: analytic, deductive, inductive. The methods of natural science are extremely important for our work, but we must distinguish between method and working technique. At times we speak of a given «method» of tracing engravings, but this is not a method, it is a technique. A general method gives rise to various techniques depending on the field of application. So a first phase of our work as prehistorians will be a specifically prehistoric method: the collection of archaeological records. Obviously the techniques differ according to the type of relic.

Another methodological point is represented by what we do not yet know. For example, before the discovery of Rouffignac, statistics had been made indicating a density of rhinoceri in Palaeolithic art which was completely false. The discovery of Rouffignac in itself showed how wrong these statistics were. At the end of the first phase of the prehistorian's work it is necessary to provide data.

At this point we will be able to see whether we have comparable or differing manifestations. After having seen the similarities which exist, we reach the crossroads with other disciplines, where we have to face the problem of significance and meaning. Dr. Makarius will now speak of the methodological problems in connection with ethnology.

MAKARIUS R.:

Methodologically, for the ethnologist, the main problem is that of ethnocentrism or homocentrism. This is also a danger for the historian and the prehistorian. We could also call this intellectual or conceptual ethnocentrism. It is a great danger because it acts unconsciously. It is necessary to be self-critical at all times. For example if we find a half-human, half-animal figure, we are inclined to say it is a man disguised as an animal. This is because it is what we expect. We certainly would not consider it to be an animal disguised as a man. If we take Egyptian representations of gods, we may see the whole body human and the head is that of a jackal. We imagine this as a god with a jackal's head. We don't consider this as a jackal with a human body. This, however, is the origin of the representation, borne out by the following: before the 1st dynasty, Egypt was divided into different groups and each had a totemic emblem. The emblem was of this kind, a pole with a cross-part bearing a figure. At times the jackal had to act, to seize an ax for example, and an arm was made to reach out, a human arm, from the pole to grasp the ax. It is clear that the animal used a human arm: it is a jackal totem with a human body. Our instinctive explanation derives from the fact we are human and tend to place man at the centre of the world.

The other example is that of «Les Trois-Frères» cave, which we discussed already. It has been debated whether the figure represented a sorcerer, a god, a masked hunter or other. Finally it was called a sorcerer, that is, a disguised man. A composite figure with different parts of the body belonging to different animals. This explanation derives again from what I called homocentricism. My opinion is that this is at the same time, a sorcerer, a mythical being and the drawing itself.

In the case of primitive tribes using masks, we say they are masked men: this is *our* reality. But if you tell a masked dancer that he is not the being he believes to be, that he is just a masked man, he will not agree. He has a different reality. When somebody in these tribes wears a mask he is no longer a masked man. He is another being, neither human nor animal.

There are examples to show the dangers of our subconscious homocentricism which explains problems in the light of what we think today.

Going on to another methodological danger, we have the tendency to attribute what we do not understand to ideologic or religious factors. In my paper, I referred to Léroigourhan's, dividing animal cave art on the basis of the sex attributions. His interpretation is based on a comparative method, which he has elsewhere refuted, and one of the bases was that since in «developed» religion sexuality is often a prominent ingredient, *therefore* it was reasonable to consider that the sexual division in cave paintings was a reflection of prehistoric man's religion.

I show you that the sexual division may be interpreted as the reflection of the social and feeding division which existed; in such case it has nothing to do with religion. It is dangerous to explain things we do not understand by means of ideological, religious or mystical reasons, in essence by an abstract explanation instead of looking for the explanation in the social function of the phenomenon.

BELTRAN:

When we move into the area of interpretation, ethnologists and other specialists have a very important role. I think it would be interesting to hear from somebody studying symbols.

SANSONE:

As for prehistoric art methodology, one must count palaethnological indications and evaluations, a domain of archaeological research. As mentioned by Prof. Beltran, exhaustive analysis and publications are not always available. Even though there are problems of chronology and of context we should not forget that we still have scarce and discordant ideas on the meanings and motivations. On this point, which is a central theme of the Symposium, it is necessary to elaborate; first the correctness of possible comparisons is to be judged, together with phenomenology and history of religions. Beyond discussion one has to verify in practice the concrete information from ethnology, living or dead, with prehistoric, protohistoric or historic manifestations, many of which are interesting for late prehistoric periods, as they straddle two periods. Others essentially symbolic, as those of strictly religious or mythological character: hermetism, myths either erudite or popular.

A phenomenological analysis of religious symbols testifies above all to the extremely conservative nature of these systems and their frequent passage from a dying to a rising religion. No doubt a great number of sources contain in a more or less direct way prehistoric elements. Particular concern should be devoted to recurrent symbols which are generally the simplest and the most revealing. This is an optimal way to verify archetypal patterns which are universal religious and conceptual expressions. A better understanding of this universality can help in interpreting prehistoric manifestations from which we can extrapolate only indications of the same type: basic and essential. I think that this universality binds the most diverse symbolic-religious systems. Along these lines Jung developed his psychological analysis.

Humans have basic universal, physical characteristics and there is no reason to doubt that some general patterns may exist in his psychological structure. Therefore what Prof. Ries calls *homo religiosus* may well have a universal basis which can be revealed by interdisciplinary research.

To further understand symbolic manifestations of prehistory no indications should be overlooked. It is absurd that the results of one discipline are not helpful for another. Perhaps the only way for a human science like ours to avoid in its practice an exasperated sectorialism is to develop synthetic visions.

BELTRAN:

At this point we are at the most delicate phase of research. It is important to have chronological indications, both absolute and relative, which allow us to refer to the actual period we are studying, and to avoid comparisons without a chronological relation, which may at

times be even useful, but are certainly dangerous. Thus we reach a problem raised by Prof. Ries, the renewal and continuation of work on prehistoric rock art. The solution is extremely difficult, but the problem itself is of great interest. If we find, as at Albaracin, a white bull which has been repainted black or red – something we can see because a part of the old painting remains – this enables us to make a general interpretation: during the time of duration of the technique beginning with the white painting and ending with the black one, the ritual or religious significance of the figure was maintained. This leads us to the study of symbols, which is a complex but relevant field.

I would like to ask Dr. Schwarz to speak of the methodological problems in studying symbols.

SCHWARZ:

There is an Eskimo belief which shows the dangers of the excesses of comparative studies. The Eskimos attribute the fertilization of women to the moon. The reasoning is that they see the woman often becomes pregnant in the period of the full moon. The moon may have helped but it is not the main ingredient.

These kinds of results are achieved when symbols are considered outside their context. It is also essential to use the contribution of all sorts of specialists and even of poets and psychologists in the understanding of symbols. The task of poets and psychologists is to combine the interpretation of symbols reached independently by specialists from different fields and make a synthesis.

I should like to warn against another error which may derive from our culture; that is the danger of placing too much trust in theories and models. Engels believed that errors were gradually eliminated as time went on. Feuerhaden on the other hand believes that errors are in themselves productive. Paraphrasing Marat, I should like to say «Encore un peu de courage, citoyens!».

BELTRAN:

Another handicap is that of terminology, which may occur at any point in the line of approach which has been illustrated. We cannot use terms that mean different things to different people. It is better to have terms without any meaning, taking the problem to the extreme, than to use terms which may be misunderstood in different ways.

Then other problems should be considered. For example, for art, there is the tendency of appreciating a cave because we feel its «beauty» and despising an «ugly» cave, which may be just as or even more important for purposes of understanding.

No method should be dismissed a priori in the study of rock art and its interpretation in association with the religion of prehistoric man. For Lascaux, studies have been published on the micro-organisms and climatic conditions affecting the color of the paintings. This may aid in discovering also the original material used etc. The procedure in essence is to obtain records and use the material in view of an interpretation. This will allow us perhaps to employ our knowledge of prehistoric art in order to gain an understanding of prehistoric religion.

ANATI:

The worst method, it seems to me, is not to have a method. In other words, according to the aims and purposes, each study should have a plan. Obviously, the team which aims at detecting the raw material used to make a painting, and the team which intends to investigate the symbolic meaning of the same painting, will not use the same methods, will not collect the same data, and will not follow the same procedure.

Sometimes, teams may be handicapped by their generalized wish of facing all aspects of a find, or what they believe to represent all aspects, without having the necessary formation and tools to do so. The first good method is to define your purposes and start your research by sticking to them. Even so, in the course of the study new elements will inevitably emerge.

Commission IV: Definition of Religion.

OOSTHUIZEN:

Is it at all possible to provide a universally acceptable definition of religion?

SCHWARZ:

I should like to stress the incoherence of the theoretical distinction between the religious and the profane. It is just as much a fallacy as that between body and mind. Heraclitus reminds us that: «Gods are immortal men, and men are mortal gods». The alchemists' objective was to understand by knowing themselves, the fact that there was no distinction between creator and created, and that they coincide. To quote Spinoza, we have «natura naturans» and «natura naturata».

MORRIS:

We are going into this question of «what is religion» too deeply! All we need to do here is to consider «magic» or «religion». Now: magic is something that I, the magician, can do *myself*. If we agree that magic is what I can do to you with no supernatural help, then for the purposes of this conference, we regard all else as religious. And so the performance of shaman who invokes the supernatural – be it evil or a god or any other spirit – must for our purpose be a form of religion. It is more than magic, and so, too, any belief in life of the spirit after death must mean belief in the power or existence of someone beyond *me*, the magician. Since this is an exposition of a belief, we must label it religious. I suggest we call «magic» all things which can be done without supernatural intervention and all supernatural beliefs as religious.

HVITDFELDT:

In the history of religions, people have over and over again tried to define it. There are at least twenty types of definition. Most likely, no historian of religions would like to try again. It has been shown that in trying to define religion you get deeper and deeper into trouble. You have to use new terms which have to be defined in turn. If we had a symposium on natural science would anybody ask what is physics?

SCHWARZ:

My definition of religion derives from Cassirer: «Religion arises when man gives up his independence as man and transfers his power of thinking to others».

RIES:

At the beginning of the century we had more than 200 definitions of religion. Dr. Schwarz has just increased the number.

I merely intend to comment on the discussion on the distinction between sacred and profane. I will comment on this in terms of the behaviour of religious man. For example, a rock has a number of meanings and uses for various men: building, decoration etc. But in the eyes of a given man the rock may represent a deity. His behaviour towards it consequently changes completely. The rock is sacred to him. The sacral dimension which in the eyes of «homo religiosus» derives from a contact with the transcendent will change the man's behaviour, and this is what we mean by «homo religiosus». My opinion therefore is completely opposed to that of Dr. Schwarz, as I believe that religion derives from a belief in transcendence.

OOSTHUIZEN:

Religion is a condition by which man wants to overcome. It is a wholeness in man, not just psychological or sociological. This makes him a «homo religiosus». It finds expression in rites and rituals and may become magical. This is not the intention of religion – that it should be magical – it is a subjection because of man's limitations to the force outside. But he needs not have a god. It is that «outside», whatever it may be, that man is trying to subject himself to.

ANATI:

It was interesting to discover how, in attempting to define religion, each one of us made a declaration of his or of her own philosophy. If twenty of us have participated in this debate, the picture we get is that of twenty scholars involved in the study of religion who are unable or unwilling to reach a common definition. And, if this happens within our team of colleagues, the discrepancies are likely to exist also when one compares the ideas on religion, let us say of a Fuegian, a Bushman, a Maori, a Beduin, an Indian Brahmin and a Kolchos Stachanovist. And yet, this might be a way to find out if this term «religion» has some general, universal, unifying meaning behind the many rational and irrational differences it provokes. I have looked into the well known definitions published in text books and could find no one fully satisfying me.

So, our quest for a definition of religion leads us to the more general question: is this word appropriate, when we deal with beliefs and experiences of societies where it was imported by the Europeans and imposed on concepts which are the intimate legacy of the individual and of the group. Is it appropriate when we discuss «prehistoric religions»? In these days we have seen how many different types of «religion» there are in the archaeological evidence.

Among the many aspects that have not been faced in the short time at our disposal is the identification role of religion. Religion simulates solidarity within the group, therefore it is and it has been for ages a factor of utmost social and political relevance. But, many factors of group identification are, inevitably, also factors of discrimination, separation and discord. No other single factor in human history, as religion, has provoked so many wars. Whatever unites two persons separates them from the others.

Another universal aspect of religions, lies in the consistent differences between what they preach and what they do. Many preach love and act for discord, many preach disregard for secular possessions, and fatten themselves in material and social gratifications, many preach for humility and modesty, but, from the Siberian Shaman to the Vatican cardinal, pompousness is part of their way of life.

There are still many aspects of religion which have not been touched on here. And the main question still remains: What is religion?

Is it legitimate to use the same word for different meanings which include social aspects, beliefs and ceremonies, local or ethnic habits and widespread values.

Many tribal cultures do not have, in their vocabulary, a word corresponding to the term «religion». They have names for their spirits or gods, for their myths, for their rites. They do not have a word for religion and do not need such a word. And they do not separate sacred from profane, as in every deed of their existence their reality is multivalent.

Religion is an intellectual expression of man, whatever definition gives to this term. Like graphic art, music, singing and dancing, it is a characteristic of one mankind. But human beings have different ways of singing and dancing and have different ways of religion.

Singing implies the making of sounds, and dancing, the making of movements. I doubt that we all agree, in similar terms, on a single element, which is a universal common denominator of religion.

Dear friends, we have reached the end of this last working session and our feeling is that problems have been opened rather than resolved.

I cannot say as yet «ite missa est». IASPER members will remain in this hall for matters concerning the Association. Tonight at the closure dinner, some political, cultural and associative issues will be presented and discussed. Tomorrow the commissions will still be at work. But the official closure of our scientific debates is now, here.

The previous conventions had prepared us for this one. And now we shall start preparing the next convention, in order to face new aspects of the themes of common concern and to continue our debates.

In this week the IASPER Association and the Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici have reinforced their ties. We are departing as one large community of people from many different countries, disciplines, formations, cultures, beliefs and ideas. Because of our differences we can stimulate each other and work together in harmony, each one with his or her own personality. We are all aware of the fact that what unites us is stronger than what separates us.

May I say to you all: Thank you for this splendid experience and *arrivederci*. We shall meet again, soon.

