Course Summary C-4.2: Introduction to Hiero-Analysis

1. Definitions and Frameworks of Hiero-Analysis

The term hiero-analysis derives from the Greek hieros (ἱερός, meaning "sacred") and analysis (the systematic examination or dissection of something). Whereas classical religious studies employ three familiar approaches—hierography (describing religious phenomena), hierology (organising them logically), and hierosophy (formulating a value judgement)—hiero-analysis goes beyond the world that can be experienced through the senses alone.

The core of this course concerns the experience of phenomena that require a particular sensitivity and clear perception in the paranormal sense of the word. The course argues that, as a result of the Enlightenment, Western civilisation became one-sidedly focused on material and intellectual reality. Referring to the philosopher G. W. F. Hegel, it observes that our world resembles a "church from which the Holy of Holies has disappeared". Hiero-analysis seeks to restore this missing dimension by studying the metaphysical world—the world of subtle-material beings, spirits and subtle energies—in a systematic and analytical way.

2. Methodological Foundations

The Lemmatic-Analytical and Reductive Method

The course uses a method that goes back to the ancient Greek philosopher Plato. This lemmatic-analytical method begins with a hypothesis or assumption (the lemma) that "the sacred" actually exists. Analysis and testing are then used to seek evidence that can verify or falsify this hypothesis.

Unlike a purely deductive system (such as geometry), hiero-analysis works in the opposite direction: it analyses the actual structure of religious experiences.

Scientific Limits and Paranormal Perception

The course criticises an ideological form of science that claims that anything that cannot be measured by the senses does not exist. "Hard" science examines only a subset of the total ontological reality. According to the course, claiming that paranormal experiences do not exist because one has never experienced them oneself is an epistemological error, comparable to reasoning that Antarctica does not exist because one has never been there. At its deepest core, true religion is a dynamic, paranormal event; anyone who rejects this leads a secular life without awareness of a higher reality.

Biblical and Ancient Illustrations

As a model for reductive analysis, the course uses the biblical story of the Three Wise Men from the East (Matthew 2:1–12). The "Star of Bethlehem" is interpreted here as a supernatural celestial body that could be perceived and interpreted only through clairvoyant, paranormal vision. God guides the initiated not through outward spectacle, but through dream-images, nocturnal visions and inner intuitions.

This sensitivity was also present in classical antiquity. In the Odyssey, Homer describes how King Odysseus was able to navigate thanks to his clairvoyance and his constant interaction with gods, spirits and beings of the underworld. Whereas the Greek gods were changeable and two-faced—they prescribed laws that they themselves violated—the biblical God is characterised by ethical perfection and consistency.

3. Analysis of the Sacred: Salvation History and Cosmology

The Four Moments of Christianity

Referring to the Catholic educator O. Willmann, the course distinguishes four major phases in salvation history (sacred history):

1. The regulative model (preparation): The history preceding the coming of Jesus.
2. Entry into time: The birth, public life, suffering and resurrection of Jesus
3. The applicative model (continuing action): The ongoing work of salvation through the Holy Spirit throughout the history of the Church.
4. The atemporal moment: The final fulfilment and the Second Coming of Christ at the end of time.

According to Saint Augustine, profane (visible) history never unfolds separately from this sacred (invisible) dimension; human action gains its true meaning only when it becomes part of sacred history.

Philosophical Currents: Theory of Forms and Hylic Pluralism

1. Plato's Theory of Forms: Forms are not subjective contents of the human mind, but objective realities in a higher world. This forms the basis of the philosophia perennis (the perennial philosophy).

2. Solovyov versus Darwin: The Russian thinker Solovyov contrasted Darwin's chance-driven evolution with a conscious evolution guided by God, in which pre-existing divine ideas are gradually realised on Earth.

3. J. Poortman and Hylic Pluralism: In his work Ochêma, J. Poortman examines the doctrine of the “subtle-material vehicle”. Because there is a great variety of spirits, there is also hylic pluralism: a multiplicity of types and degrees of subtle matter (hulē), each with its own specific weight.

4. The Three Main Types of the Sacred

Following philosophers of religion such as Nathan Söderblom and W. E. Hocking, the course divides the experience of the sacred into three main types: animism (entities and spirits), dynamism (forces and energies), and causal belief (the causing of effects in this world).

4.1 Animism (Belief in Spirits and Entities)

Animism is the belief in and experience of life, life-force and conscious entities originating in the invisible world. Well-known historical examples include the mantic vision of the goddess Aphrodite by a Greek farmer, the Witch of Endor summoning the prophet Samuel (1 Samuel 28), and Jesus’ descent into hell.

The course distinguishes six specific models within animism:

1. Animatism: The belief that everything that exists—including apparently lifeless objects such as stones—possesses some form of life or inner force.
2. Incarnation belief: The view that a spiritual entity takes up residence in a plant, animal or human being.
3. Fetishism: A specially prepared object into which extra life-force has been accumulated through a magical process.
4. Possession: A state in which a person is taken over by one or more foreign spirits and used as an instrument.
5. Thigh-spirit belief (Genius & Juno): Ancestors chose their concepts in relation to subtle-material forces. The Dutch word for “thigh” is linked here to “flourishing” or “growing”; a woman’s thighs are also associated with the place from which new life emerges. They are described as being especially charged with subtle-material energy. The Romans spoke of a male thigh spirit (genius) and a female thigh spirit (Juno). In Christianity, these correspond to the inner “Adam” or “Eve”. A related phenomenon is nahualism (the exchange of soul-substance with an animal guardian spirit).
6. Belief in higher spirits: Interaction with functional spirits, in which a magical exchange of soul-substance may take place.

4.2 Dynamism (Belief in Subtle-Material Forces)

Whereas animism focuses on beings, dynamism focuses on the forces emanating from them. Animism and dynamism are inseparably connected:

entities always carry forces, and forces are always accompanied by subtle-material beings.

Important elements of dynamism include:

1. Manaism (R. H. Codrington): Belief in an impersonal, supernatural and pervasive force called mana.

2. Magism and Reichenbach's Od theory: The practical handling of subtle-material energies (od).

3. Tabooism: A system of avoidance intended to prevent contact with dangerous or excessively charged forces.

4. Forms of mana and sexual power: The division into male and female mana. The magical charge attributed to sexual organs (fascinus, the Vestal Virgins and ritual nudity practices) also falls within this dynamistic framework.

4.3 Causal Belief

Causal belief shows how religion, understood as the action of forces from entities in the other world, produces concrete, observable effects in material reality.

Its key aspects are:

1. Naturism and nature spirits: The influence of elemental beings (such as water nymphs) on nature.

2. The law of conservation of mana: Energy within the magical field is not lost, but transformed.

3. Creating a revenge demon: An intensive magical practice in which stored hatred and mana are used to create an artificial entity (a revenge demon), which in turn makes exorcism or an incantation necessary.

4. Söderblom's Urheber: The idea of the "first cause" or creator god in archaic religions.

5. Demonism as a Major Religious Problem

The final section of the course deals with the dark side of the metaphysical world: demonism.

1. The twofold powerlessness: A person who enters the occult world unprepared or without ethical protection becomes entangled in forces they can no longer control.

2. The biblical warning: Referring to Deuteronomy 18:9–12, the course emphasises that summoning the dead, divination, mantic practices and black

magic are strictly forbidden in the Bible. These practices expose people to disruptive subtle-material entities.

3. Satan versus the Trinity: The metaphysical struggle reaches its climax in the confrontation between the dark powers (Satan) and the divine order (the Holy Trinity).

Conclusion

The course Introduction to Hiero-Analysis provides a systematic and in-depth overview of the invisible, paranormal dimension of religion. By combining Plato's reductive method, the study of hylic pluralism, and the typologies of animism, dynamism and causation, the course leads students beyond superficial material observations. It reminds readers that religion, in its essence, is a living, dynamic operation of forces that continually permeates profane human history.