Summary of Text 14 "W.B. Kristensen's Corrections to Mircea Eliade" (12 pp.)

This text offers an in-depth historical analysis of religion, examining the ancient concepts of 'cycle' (lustratio), 'totality' and 'dualism' within Roman, Egyptian and Babylonian religious practices.

According to Kristensen, the ritual cycle (such as the Roman lustratio on the Campus Martius) is not merely a magic circle intended to establish boundaries or ward off evil, but a repeated sacred act through which divine life force is communicated in order to raise the people from spiritual exhaustion and death.

These spatial and temporal loops - represented by the five-yearly lustra, the secular saeculum festivals, the ritual driving of the nail of fate by the highest magistrate, and the mythical city and fortress walls of cities such as Memphis and Thebes - referred to the underworld and to the periodic renewal of 'absolute life', which returns to itself.

These practices are based on the ancient concept of divine 'totality', personified by deities of the upper and underworld, such as the Babylonian Anu or the Roman Dis Pater and Proserpina, who stand above human reason and moral law and in whom ascent and decline, salvation and calamity are intrinsically intertwined.

Kristensen concludes that magical incantation practices, too, do not essentially involve an absolute dualism between purely good and evil powers, but rather constitute a controlled appeal to this demonic totality, in which calamity and ultimate salvation spring from the same divine source.