The sacred from the transcendence of the Logos to the manifestation of the mythos -A reading of the philosophy of interpretation of the sacred according to René Guénon (Abdul Wahid Yahya)-

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Abstract:

We encounter the Quran's suspension of judgment on the absurdity and irrationality of myths without presenting a definitive ruling on their falsity or irrationality. Myths cannot be simply dismissed as a naive form of human thinking; rather, in most of their manifestations, they express a mode of being in the world. For primitive peoples, they represented a puzzling existential moment, while also serving as an outlet for liberation from this reality. Myths possess the characteristic of expressing a certain truth, considering the human position towards this truth. According to René Guénon, the language of religious discourse, which inherently carries a sacred nature, reflects the sacredness of the texts it conveys. Guénon distinguishes between two types of language: a stable language, often referred to as a dead language, and a sacred language, which is capable of preserving the stability of texts and writings. In his view, any language remains stable as long as it is tied to the formulation of writings of various traditional religions, a stability that is currently only found in the Arabic language.

Keywords: Mythos - Logos - Religious texts - Sacred - Symbol - Sacred language - Dead language - Interpretation – Numbers.

Introduction:

The fields of symbol are indivisible from the fields of religion, whether through its texts and writings, or through the manifestations of its events, all of which consider miracles to be the most prominent forms, and closer to the nature and reality of the symbol. The symbolic rhetoric, although seemingly grounded in the mundane things of the material realm, has always sought to convey something about the paradoxical truth, contrary to what the rationalists and the secularists - since Galilee - have claimed when they recognized that the symbol is an ontological commitment that should not extend beyond the worldlyperspective. This claim made it impossible for modern thought to surpass the narrow realms of rationalism and secularism. Modern thought considers it insanity to search for or acknowledge the existence of the truth of a discourse that is different from what the mind considers certain. This can be considered "the rule of modern science and modern philosophy that applies to all the religious culture.[1]"The modern Western man has grown accustomed to viewing other religions merely as symbols reflecting imagination and poetry, often placing them within the realms of superstition and the miraculous "The day has come when Christians themselves will return to their beliefs and sacred writings, and they will find themselves forced to acknowledge the kinship - despite

the differences - that links their religion to the symbolic and metalogical discourse of all the religions of the Earth.[2]"

If holiness is an inherent characteristic of texts, particularly in their metaphorical connotations, then this same holiness affects human consciousness based on the degree of manifestation of the sacred Absolute within this consciousness. Consequently, interpretive approaches proliferate in accordance with the degree of holiness this consciousness bestows upon the Absolute Sacred. This effect directs consciousness towards a compelling authority, which often hardens the mind of the interpreter, sometimes leading to mental rigidity. It appears that the sacred wields significant jurisdiction, in guiding or determining every interpretation of any type of text, whether within the sect devoted to the sacred or within the circle that rebels against all forms of holiness.

Initially, **René Guénon** determines that the symbol has metaphysical foundations, which simultaneously allows him to grasp truths without succumbing to what might be termed literal fundamentalism. We can elucidate these foundations in two similar yet distinct ways: the first is articulated through what he terms the 'doctrine of compatibility' among the manifold states of being. This approach, being objective, views the world from a macrocosmic, cosmic perspective. The second approach is microcosmic, concerned with the infinitesimally small realm, and in this regard, it is subjective. Therefore, the second approach merely represents the necessary interpretation of the first; when rationalizing the degrees of truth, we transition to the specific being, namely, the human being.

René Guénon (Abdel Wahid Yahya)

John Marie Joseph René Guenon, also known as **J.M.J. René Guénon**, was born on the fifteenth of November 1886, in the French city of Blois, into a devout Catholic community. Since his childhood, he had been distinguished by his sharp intelligence but suffered from poor health. He continued his studies in his hometown until he obtained a baccalaureate degree, after which he moved to Paris in 1904 to pursue further education. However, after two years of studying mathematics, he dropped out, and thus he became integrated into the cultural community engaged in researching the human heritage, particularly what is often referred to as "Sacred Knowledge." During this period, signs of his rejection of traditional religious forms began to emerge[3]. Paris during this period was teeming with esoteric doctrines and movements such as Theosophy, Hermeticism, and Freemasonry, in which **Guénon** participated for a limited time before disassociating himself from them. Later, he embarked on a vigorous campaign against these movements, resulting in a permanent rift between him and their adherents. Indeed, some historians argue that **Guénon's** outspoken criticism, particularly directed towards the Jews, played a significant role in his marginalization and neglect within French intellectual circles. However, despite this, many prominent figures in the Western school of thought recognize him as a genius. **Andre Gide** expressed his admiration for **Guénon's** works, stating: "If **Guénon** is correct, then my works and my entire life are meaningless. Had I encountered **Guénon** in my youth, my life would have taken a different path.[4]"

Between 1904 and 1912, he taught in free schools in Paris, until he converted to Islam at the hands of **Sheikh Abd al-Rahman Alish**, a Moroccan scholar and sheikh of the Maliki school of thought in Cairo[5]. During World War I, he continued teaching in free schools until 1917 when he was appointed to teach philosophy in Blois. After the war, he was assigned to teach philosophy in Setif, Algeria. However, he soon returned to Paris to focus on in-depth studies of the human spiritual heritage. He published numerous articles in the magazine *Le Voile d'Isis*, later renamed *Les Etudes Traditionnelles*, after a disagreement with the Catholic magazine *Regnabit*, where he had previously published his articles[6].

In 1929, **Guénon** published a book that can be considered a seminal work in political philosophy, titled *'Spiritual Sovereignty and Temporal Authority.''Autorité spirituelle et pouvoir temporel'* In this book, he explored various political concepts, particularly the connection between sovereignty and the absolute, as well as the temporal nature of power. Additionally, he identified the political origins of the crisis in the modern world, which stemmed from the complete separation of the monarchy from the clergy,and this in turn gave rise to secularism and contributed to the proliferation of democratic ideals across various spheres of social life.

In 1930, **René Guénon** moved to Cairo to settle there and profess his conversion to Islam under the name **Abd al-Wahid Yahya**. There, he mastered the Arabic language, both verbally and in writing. He studied the writings of the great Sufis, most notably **Muhyiddin ibn Arabi**, and adopted the Sufi path as a means of pursuing knowledge and achieving the absolute truth to which he always aspired. He remained in Cairo until his death on January 7, 1951.

Tracing back to 1931, he wrote the book'*The Symbolism of the Cross*'*Le Symbolisme de la Croix*, in which he explored various philosophical concepts, including principles that he believed would establish the foundation for interpreting religious symbols, that in turn would be applied to religious texts and their symbolism found within traditional teachings of both the East and West, placing particular emphasis on Qur'anic texts in the Arabic language, which he described as the sacred language par excellence.

In 1931, he wrote one of his most complex philosophical books of a traditional nature,*'Multiple states of existence';Les Etats Multiples De L'être.* This in-depth metaphysical study addresses the ideas of the infinite and the absolute, and their relationship to essence and manifestation. In 1945, he published another critical philosophical work, *'Le règne de la quantité et les signes des temps';The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times*, in which he critiques Western thought. This book continues the themes from his earlier work, The Crisis of the Modern World, focusing on the materialistic and technical character of Western civilization[7]. In addition to these works, Guénon left behind a substantial body of writing, including approximately thirty books and hundreds of articles, although only a few of these articles have been translated into Arabic.

Symbol and features of the myth:

Ancient myths were characterized by three main features: imitation of superhuman models, repetition of events dating back to the dawn of creation, and a transcendence of earthly time through a connection to the whole and sacred universal time. This implies that we are constantly immersed in a myth experience of some sort. What sets myth apart from ordinary narratives is its comprehensive nature, serving as a narrative framework based on the world system, and aims to explain the origins and influences behind natural phenomena. Human beings, endowed with consciousness, are perpetually seeking meaning within the reality that envelops them.

To create a myth is to create meaning. What the analysis of the content of the human imagination suggests, is the existence of an immanent system of relationships and values of a metaphysical nature, which are considered essential to every deep dimension of human existence."Myths serve as narratives recounting events since the dawn of history, depicting the actions of gods or celestial beings at the beginning of time. To recount a myth is to articulate the primordial events.[8]"These narratives convey sacred truths, for the sacred epitomizes reality itself -as expressed by *Marcia Eliade-*, andanything belonging to the mundane realm cannot partake in sacred existence. For only when the mundane is ontologically grounded in myth does it acquire the potential to embody an ideal model of behavior. Consider the model of daily human activities, for example agriculture, which has remained fundamental to human existence. We observe that such activities possess a symbolic

essence, signifying humanity's connection to the sacred. They serve as manifestations of the sacred within human behavior across diverse cultures and epochs, underscoring a common feature of religious beliefs.

In contemporary societies, this activity, stripped of sanctity 'Désacralisée', assumes a purely worldly character driven by material economic necessity. It's an activity that lacks religious symbolism, with the term 'agriculture' referring solely to external, material activity devoid of deeper meaning. However, from a religious perspective, this same activity takes on a different dimension. It represents a journey toward the sacred, symbolizing the emergence of existence from nothingness and the liberation from the relative toward the absolute. In essence, as it is among primitive peoples, it signifies continuous fertility. Until the end of time, farming remains a sacred activity. Due to this connection, as Guenon sees, the ancients did not view such human activities from a purely worldly perspective, but rather viewed them as crafts, "Embedded within the fabric of religion and provides those who practice it with a means of actual participation in the sacred. This underscores the idea that such activities possess a sacred characteristic, often expressed through rituals. Thus, we can assert that every interest of this kind is inherently sacred... Activities that did not originally exist only endure because of their sacred function.[9]"

Thus, myth is closely linked to ritual patterns. Ritual, with its recurring cycles, may appear habitual due to its repetition, but it is deeply connected to myth. From a logical perspective, its essence may lie in what **Kant** identified as 'disorder,' what Hegel described as 'the manifestation of the absolute,' or what **Claude Lévi-Strauss** referred to as 'the underlying logical structure common at all levels.' This connection helps explain the multiplicity of meanings and their varied uses. "Myth and ritual are, in fact, complementary expressions of a single destiny. A ritual represents the image, while myth is realized through the stages of history that humanity has experienced.[10]"**Luc Benoit** defined the ritual, he says:"A ritual can be defined as a series of movements that respond to essential needs, movements that must be carried out according to a certain consistency."

According to the derivation of this word from Sanskrit, it means what is in accordance with the system[11]. With this concept, rituals become a set of practical actions that accompany a sense of submission to the sacred. They embody the practical expression of the idea of holiness, intertwining rituals with sanctity. Sometimes, these practices themselves take on a sacred character, so that through the accompanying feeling of the sacred, all rituals become sacred. This holds true even if the sense of the presence of the source of holiness is absent, as the concern for performing rituals sacredly remains.

The term 'myth' was commonly used in Western thought during the nineteenth century to refer to anything that contrasted with reality. This usage dates back to the Enlightenment and the rise of positivist philosophy. According to **Mircea Eliade**, this use carries a hint of Christian influence, as it deemed erroneous anything not grounded in the Old and New Testaments, thereby categorizing it as 'myth' or 'fable'[12].

The justification of this meaning is evident, from a semantic standpoint at least, considering the intense dialectical conflict between Christianity and paganism. As the twentieth century began, the Western perspective underwent a profound transformation, notably with the publication of **Rudolf Otto's** seminal work, that marked a significant philosophical and cultural shift in the study of myths.

In contemporary ethnological and anthropological studies, the Western view of myth no longer portrays it as distinct from reality. Instead, it is approached through an understanding of primitive and ancient societies, where myths served as the foundation of their social and cultural life. For these societies, myths held the essence of absolute truth, serving as narratives that conveyed the sacred.

According to **Mircea Eliade**, they encapsulate the sacred time of beginnings, representing an authentic expression of both 'reality and the sacred'.

Myth has evolved into a behavioral model that transcends individual actions, embodying the ideal behaviors of gods or mythical heroes, or at the very least, conveying their significance. In primitive and ancient societies, humans expressed their detachment and separation from worldly time and entered the realm of sacred universal time[13]. **Mircea Eliade**accordingly, suggests that myth should not be dismissed as mere fanciful tales; rather, it represents a distinct mode of thought, separate from our own. Therefore, we should avoid making final, a priori judgments declaring its irrationality or absurdity.

Myths cannot be dismissed as mere products of naive human thinking. Instead, in most cases, they represent an expression of existence in the world. For primitive peoples, myths served as a response to the perplexing existential questions they faced, offering a means of liberation. They possess the unique ability to convey a certain truth, albeit in a manner divergent from conventional perceptions, reflecting humanity's stance toward this truth. Myth, therefore, reflects human positioning. Or rather "The existence of myth indicates that humans were once deeply intrigued by their place in the world. The subjects of myths were truths that profoundly influenced human consciousness; even if paradoxical, they were inherently religious truths.[14]"

From this standpoint, myth is inseparable from religion, symbolism, and the sacred. **Carl Gustav Jung's** assertion in *'L'homme à la découverte de son âme'* rings true: the crisis facing modern humanity, following its rupture with Christianity, lies in the continuous quest for a new myth capable of reconnecting individuals with spiritual sources and providing them with creative energy. Although myths inherently express states of consciousness symbolically, they do not conform to conventional logical and conceptual dimensions. **Jacques Grand'Maison** suggests that attempting to fit myth into a logical framework and defining it with clear expressions, whether spoken or written, is a methodological error[15].

While **Carl Gustav Jung** adds a psychological dimension to myth, they are not merely fictional tales created by humans to satisfy artistic desires, nor are they ordinary narratives. As **Jung** posits, "It is difficult to accept the idea that myth was consciously created for a specific purpose or vice versa. Instead, we have another impression: that it represents an involuntary recognition of a pre-existing psychological phenomenon that lacks consciousness."[16] In its symbolic form, myth is considered a psychological effect that signifies a type of psychological disorder embedded in the collective unconscious, influencing behavior unconsciously. This does not negate the symbolic value of myth; indeed, interpreting its symbols aids in understanding the relationship between human reality and the mystical world they seek to comprehend[17].

In this realm, **Carl Gustav Jung** refers to definition of myth: "In a primitive society, myth— in its living, spontaneous form— is not merely a collection of narrated stories; it is a lived reality. It transcends the realm of creativity found in contemporary novels. Rather, it is perceived as a tangible reality, believed to have occurred in ancient times and still impacting the lives and destinies of individuals today. These narratives are not merely products of human invention or mere storytelling. Instead, they are regarded as inherent truths, possessing significant power and importance. They dictate current activities and shape the future fate of humanity. Myth serves as the foundation for ritual practices and customs, providing both the subjects for such practices and the impetus to engage in them.[18]"

This definition aligns closely with **Mircea Eliade's** perspective,because according to **Malinowski**, myth intertwines with the reality of primitive societies, encompassing their beliefs, customs, and rituals. It serves as a wellspring of inspiration for the rules, systems, and frameworks that shape the

social fabric of these societies, drawing from a heritage deeply rooted in history. Myth directs and molds present-day lifestyles, influencing the anticipated destiny of these peoples. It is essential not to assess myth through the lens of contemporary Western standardized man, who lives in a modern society, that has beensecularized and disconnected from ancient heritage, and lacks the behavioral components transmitted through what **Jung** termed the collective unconscious.

However, **Jung** criticizes **Malinowski** for overlooking two key characteristics of myth: its symbolic nature and its pathological aspect, both of which shape the lives of people. Myth is a living entity whose influence on behavior remains deeply immanent in human reality. **Malinowski's** dismissal of myth's symbolic characteristic stems from his belief that myth tellers affirm the truth of their narratives, considering them to be events from ancient historical periods. These events, in mythic form, explain universal concepts connected to the human world. **Malinowski** failed to recognize this aspect.**Jung**stating, "The telling of legends neither confirms nor denies anything.[19]" Additionally, **Malinowski** vehemently rejects the notion of myth possessing a pathological element. In **Jung's** view:myth cannot be interpreted as merely satisfying a need or scientific curiosity. Instead, it serves as a re-creation of events or facts from ancient historical periods, presented in narrative form. Myth never seeks in any shape or form to explain; rather, it reaffirms past events, serving as an ideal model and ensuring its continued significance.

Examining the usage of the word 'myth' in the Arabic language reveals a suspension of judgment regarding the absurdity and irrationality of myth within the Qur'anic text, as articulated by pagan Arabs, particularly among the eloquent speakers of the Quraysh tribe. They employed this term in a derogatory manner, seeking to devalue the Qur'anic text, yet the Qur'an itself does not definitively rule on the validity or invalidity of myths, their superstitions, or their rationality. The Qur'an's usage of the word differs from that found in Christian and Jewish sacred texts. Even until the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the current century, Christian fathers viewed sacred writings as expressions of faith inseparable from the Logos, while mythos was and remains a characteristic of pagan thought.

In a lecture entitled: Reason and Faith in the Christian Tradition and the Christian Present, **Pope Benedict XVI** says:"I see that in this particular issue it is possible to reach harmony between the Greek conviction and the Biblical understanding of faith in God. If we go back to the first sentence in the Gospel of John, we find: (in the beginning was the word 'Logos' and the word was God) God works with the Logos, and the Logos means both 'word' and 'reason' or 'mind'... and it is the mind that is able to communicate, communicating in itself as a mind. Thus, John says the final statement about the Christian understanding of God, and in this statement all the threads and lines of Christian faith converge. **John the Apostle** says that in the beginning there was the Logos, and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God, and this meeting between the Gospel message and Greek thought did not happen by chance.[20]"

This claim that the Christian faith is inseparable from the Logos is not justified in the eyes of many Western thinkers, including some radical Christians. In the face of the Christian faith, we constantly find ourselves practicing mythical rites and rituals, and in this way, **Kierkegaard** calls sincere Christians to be contemporary with Christ. He presents Christ as both a role model and an ideal model of behavior. **Kierkegaard** suggests that in the practice of Christian rituals, believers transcend earthly time by engaging with the personality of Christ, thereby entering into a sacred, primordial time.Time is not homogeneous; it is punctuated by interruptions that continually separate secular time from sacred time. Sacred time is endlessly repeated, which is why discussions about the end of history take on a secular, rather than sacred, perspective. Myths, along with their symbols and signs, never leave human

consciousness; instead, they change their appearance and underlie activities. Consequently, they influence individual and social behavior, both consciously and unconsciously. This process shapes the cultures and religious beliefs of peoples, thereby defining the sacred character inherent in such symbols and signs.

Metaphysics and symbolism according to René Guenon:

René Guénon links myth and the sacred by analyzing the etymology of the word 'mythos.' He posits that the Greek word 'mythos' derives from the root 'mu,' which in Latin is 'mutus,' meaning 'mute.' The term refers to the meaning of a 'closed mouth.' This leads us to the concept of 'silence,' and then to the meaning of the verb 'muein,' which means 'to close your mouth,' 'to be silent,' or 'hush.' However, the extensive use of this term also came to imply a parallel meaning: 'close your eyes.' This led **Guénon** to question how a term originally signifying silence or closing the eyes came to denote a type of narrative[21]?

Silence, as he says, should be a characteristic of things that are inherently difficult to express, at least directly in ordinary language use. Since alluding to the inexpressible and disclosing it is one of the general functions of the symbol, it resorts to bringing this hidden aspect to light, or rather 'objectifying' it, to integrate it within the general structure of language. According to **Roman Jakobson**, this structure is based on two fundamental axes: the syntagmatic axis and the paradigmatic axis. The first is horizontal, as the structures of language are merely a series of verbal constructs organized according to fixed rules, which may evolve within a particular linguistic framework over a specific period and according to the intellectual development of each society's culture. The second axis is vertical; it is the axis of similarity, through which one can always substitute one word for another that shares a similarity with it[22]. Through these substitutions, which allow transition from one linguistic system to another "from the lower to the higher in an ascending curve, or from the tangible to the more complexthe initial direction of myths is determined, as **Guénon** expresses it"

There is no clearer indication of **Guénon's** point than **Plato's** use of myths in presenting concepts that aim to transcend the boundaries of his usual dialectics. **Plato** found in myths an outlet through which he could delve into the depths of his thoughts, which, due to their profundity, could only be expressed through symbols[23]. Symbols are even embedded in the structure of the rituals accompanying myths, as these rituals become a series of customs repeated over time. The movement accompanying these repeated customs suggests the realization of the event in time, which led **René Guénon** to observe 'a similarity between the symbol and the custom, not because every custom is a symbol realized in time, but because the graphic symbol, in contrast, is the fixation of a ritual movement.[24]' Since what the myth expresses is different from what it seeks to convey in its direct form, it is thus a suggestion of a type of analogy. Therefore, we can consider the myth as the essence and core of all symbolism.

From here, we can say, as **Guénon** sees it, that we should maintain silence when myths speak, as it is from this that the myth indeed derives its name. In this context, **Guénon** presents a text from the Gospel, highlighting—from within the words of Christ, who says: "For those who are outside, I tell them with these parables, so that even though they see, they do not perceive, and even though they hear, they understand nothing[25]"—that the discourse in this phrase pertains to those who only comprehend the apparent meanings of words and are unable to grasp what lies beyond to reach what is inexpressible. These are the ones to whom the Gospel's phrase applies: "The knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven has not been given to them." He comments, indicating that the purpose of presenting this Gospel text is to show the nature of the relationship between the word 'mythe' and the word 'mystère,' both derived from the same root[26].

Even in the Qur'anic text, we find a connection between the idea of not comprehending what is inexpressible and the symbol that alludes to it. **Allah Almighty says**: ⟨And who is a greater wrongdoer than one who was reminded of the signs of Allah, but he turned away from them and forgot those (evil deeds) which his hands had sent forward? Verily, we have cast veils over their hearts so that they may (not) understand this truth, and have plugged their ears with heaviness (so that they may not hear this truth). And if you invite them towards guidance, never ever will they take guidance⟩[27]"
[*]. And if the Greek word 'mustérion' means a hidden, strange, and perplexing mystery, which in turn implies a sense of silence, this implication can be interpreted, according to **René Guénon**, in several different ways. Each interpretation possesses its essence of existence from a certain perspective, but despite their differences, they are connected by a subtle bond that is not directly perceived or given by merely examining the surface of the word. In this regard, he approaches what **Paul Ricoeur** would later call the relationships of meaning when discussing myths and the stakes of meaning.

The apparent and general meaning of the term "hidden mystery" (mystère), according to **Guénon**, is: "what should not be disclosed, which implies that we must remain silent about it, or what must not be broadcast.[28]" This prohibition against disseminating certain teachings should be considered, in a way, as having symbolic value because there is an inherent connection between symbolism and secrecy. This concept has an Arabic equivalent in **Al-Qazwini's** definition of symbolism: "It is to indicate something close to you in a hidden manner." The hidden or concealed secret, due to the level of secrecy imposed by belonging, is embodied in the mode of religious texts that formed the early teachings of the Church at its inception, more than it is in the mysteries of ancient religions filled with mythological spirit. This has resulted in a cautious hostility towards the other—the non-belonger—stemming from a lack of understanding and perception of the worldly realm, which directly points to the nature of the relationship between the sacred and the worldly.

In this direction imposed by the nature of the etymological analysis of the term, we can draw the connecting lines between the hidden mystery, the myth, and the sacred. These lines, which we can perceive through the surplus of meaning—expressed by **Ricoeur**—that overflows from the term "mystère," indicate a depth beyond the surface. The meaning implied by this term is: "what we must receive in silence, and what should not be discussed. From this perspective, this term could apply to all religious dogmas because they contain truths that by their very nature transcend all debates[29]". In this context, the incorporation of hidden secrets into the broad meaning within the "worldly" realm serves as an invitation to discussions and conflicts, with all the potential dire consequences encapsulated in the term "profanation"—violation or desecration—which should be taken here in its literal and comprehensive sense. **Guénon** cites a directive from the Gospel expressing this meaning: "Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or else they will trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.[30]"

The third meaning presented by **Guénon** for the term "mystère" may be the most profound in terms of its significance. It considers the hidden mystery as something that cannot be articulated. Since this latter aspect is also incommunicable—meaning it cannot be conveyed or

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[*]Translation of Aya 57 Surah Kahf 18 by Shaykh ul Islam Dr. Muhammad Tahir ul Qadri. https://www.irfan-ul-quran.com/english/Surah-al-Kahf-with-english-translation/57

disclosed to others—this likewise prohibits the dissemination of a specific pattern of teachings with a sacred or esoteric nature. This in itself symbolizes the impossibility of expressing in words the secrets contained within these teachings, which are nothing more than the visible, apparent garment veiling what lies behind[31]. Thus, teachings related to the inexpressible can only hint at or suggest what is concealed behind them, accompanied by images or icons that serve as contemplative supports.

Thus, each pattern of teachings takes on its form, imbued with symbolic character. This vertical exchange has always progressed along this trajectory and is evident in the cultures of all peoples. "We can say that symbols—especially myths when they translate these teachings into words—actually constitute the language of these teachings." Every piece of knowledge we can acquire, if possible, must necessarily borrow a garment of expressions, recognizing the limitations of these expressions in carrying the hidden meanings behind them. Consequently, they necessarily resort to symbolic form, and from this perspective, myths take on their symbolism. Ideas, according to **Guénon**, always hide behind language, which means that there are ideas that remain concealed behind words[32]. This necessitates their interpretation according to the semantic context of the phrases, as well as the cultural and historical context.Indeed, sometimes words themselves, according to some, take the place of absent or completely hidden ideas, leading us to believe—as **Guénon** sees it—that these individuals themselves are unable to grasp the meanings and transfer them to others. "Language serves ideas in a significant way, not only because it provides us with a means of communication to the extent it can bear, but also because it helps us to better refine and specify ourselves, making them more conscious to a fuller and clearer extent. Alongside these indisputable positives, there are also serious negatives conveyed by language, or rather by the excessive reliance on language." The negative, in **Guénon's** view here, lies in everything related to meanings resulting from the ordinary use of words, a use that produces the formalism of expression, synonymous with the literal meaning implied by words. Some might call this form of language "rhetorical language," which often signifies only superficial use[33].

Multiple meanings according to Guénon:

René Guénon's theory on meaning draws from a passage by **Dante**, where it is mentioned that expressions carry multiple meanings and that expressions are nothing but the veil that hides the meaning behind them. A skilled interpreter is one who can penetrate through the expressions to reach the hidden meaning. According to him, the multiplicity of meaning is not exclusive to sacred texts alone; even poetic texts are based on this multiplicity. This does not necessarily imply contradiction between them, nor opposition, nor that one cancels out the other. Rather, they may complement and harmonize with each other as if they were constituent elements of a single composition[34].

Guénon questions this multiplicity, noting that **Dante** only mentions three patterns of meaning, each of which offers a different interpretation. These are the verbal or apparent meaning, through which the philosophical meaning, or rather the theological-philosophical meaning, emerges; the political meaning; and finally, the social meaning.

However, **Dante** does not explicitly refer to the hidden and underlying meaning, the fourth meaning he hinted at without mention. For **René Guénon**, the hidden meaning is the doctrinal meaning, the meaning that carries within it the intentional aspect of the expression. This meaning is essentially the metaphysical meaning that relates to multiple data; if it were not so, it would

represent a superficial property. This metaphysical property is what eluded the minds of most commentators on **Dante's** texts. However, our neglect or ignorance of this hidden meaning makes it partially difficult to understand the remaining meanings because this metaphysical meaning is considered the primary principle upon which the rest are based. Its existence imbues them with a characteristic of convergence, riding on their plurality or diversity within unity and integration.

While the superficial reading of **Dante's** texts led many commentators to label his texts as heretical, attributing his beliefs to the influence of Greco-Roman beliefs that proliferated, particularly with the 'Catharisme' movement during the Middle Ages, especially in Toulouse, southern France.

Guénon responds to this explanation by attributing it to ignorance of the nature of the metaphysical meaning, which should not be labeled as pagan or Christian, because metaphysics is characterized by comprehensiveness and inclusiveness. The mystery or secrets contained in the texts, expressed in enigmatic form using symbolism as a means of expression, are always used by superficial people as a pretext to describe adherents to such symbolism as infidels or heretics.

The ignorance of the metaphysical meaning concealed behind the overt text is often used as a pretext to accuse those who disclose it in inappropriate contexts of heresy and blasphemy. Because these meanings express higher truths that are difficult to understand for those lacking the higher intellectual skills of the elite, they often lead to doctrinal and social chaos among the general population. The prohibition and condemnation of such interpretations, like preventing the common people from engaging in theological discourse, as expressed by **Al-Ghazali**, were characteristic features of medieval thought.

Guénon compares this with what happened to **Husayn ibn Mansur al-Hallaj** in Baghdad. The phrase that carries multiple meanings appears contradictory to those who are unaware of its metaphysical dimension. In fact, many instances where the hidden meanings behind the apparent verbal expressions were rejected, and those who expressed them were accused of blasphemy and heresy, were politically motivated. This was the case with the executed **Suhrawardi**, whose political inclinations suggested his allegiance to the **Ahl al-Bayt**. Similarly, in France, the Order of the Knights Templar (l'Ordre du Temple) came to an end with the burning of all its members by the order of Pope **Clement V**, who condemned them for deviating from church teachings and accused them of heresy. This was done at the instigation of King **Philip the Fair(Philippe le Bel)** in 1312[35].

The metaphysical meaning hidden behind the texts is, in fact, the meaning that shapes the nature of the sacred texts. Neither these texts can be delved into nor can their meanings be elucidated; while neglecting this dimension or the hidden meaning behind the phrases composing the texts. It was towards this hidden meaning that **Saint Bernard** directed his efforts, striving diligently to form the Order of the Knights Templar. His endeavors focused on establishing a religious movement based on constructing hidden knowledge that relies on a metaphysical dimension in understanding the texts of the sacred writings[36].

Number symbolism and sacred language:

If the language of religious discourse is the language that inherently carries a sacred nature, then according to **René Guénon**, this sacredness is merely a reflection of the texts it conveys. **Guénon** distinguishes between two types of language: a fixed language (Langue fixée), which is

usually referred to as a dead language, that does not inherently possess the nature of a dynamic discourse. This is because the symbols that constitute it are not carriers of meanings but rather symbols that correspond directly to the meanings they refer to, being defined, fixed, and their meanings direct, concluding once they are recorded. The more its symbolism is filled with hidden meanings, the more it always suggests contemplation, which is embodied in a living language that inherently possesses the nature of a dynamic discourse, which is renewed with each reading.

This, is the second type that **Guénon** calls the sacred language (La langue sacrée), which is the language capable of preserving the stability of texts and writings[37]. According to him, any language remains stable, even if it is used in performing any form of rituals or ceremonies, if it does not carry sacred texts that continuously impose the renewal of understanding and the emergence of new meanings. However, when discussing the sacred language, he points out the necessity of distinguishing it from the language of rituals and ceremonies. To serve this purpose, it is sufficient for the language to be fixed and secure from the continuous changes that most commonly used languages undergo. "But sacred languages are only those through which the writings of various traditional religions are formulated.[38]" Here, **Guénon** refers to a fundamental idea centered on the nature of language and the sacred. Sacredness is the quality that language bestows upon the written text, provided that this language contains symbols of meanings hidden behind it, understood by the recipient through the feeling resulting from the religious experience, which **Rudolf Otto** called the experience of the sacred.

Symbolism often takes the form of numerical symbolism in many religious cultures. However, in many languages, there is no distinction between number and numeral in terms of symbolism. A numeral, in truth, represents nothing more than a mere verbal garment for the number; we cannot even say it is the body of the number. Rather, we should say that the geometric shape can indeed be considered the true body of the number, as is clearly evident in the ancient theories about polygons and flat shapes, which suggest a direct relationship with the symbolism of the number. This also implies that every combination (shape plus numeral) necessarily resultsin a symbolic depiction in space (number).

This lack of distinction is encountered in many languages, such as Hebrew and Greek. However, in the Arabic language, even if we come across this confusion, it quickly dissipates with the development of Arabic as a language and the completion of linguistic and rhetorical sciences, which were primarily driven by a sacred impetus, specifically their connection to the Qur'an, as it is fundamentally linked to religious discourse. We can clearly observe this in the geometric aspect of Arabic numerals (the connection of numerals with angles and their number). The word 'chiure' in Latin languages, for example, is nothing more than a translation of the word 'sifr' 'صفر'in Arabic, which refers to a numerical value meaning the disappearance or vanishing of the angle, consideringthe geometric dimension. Additionally, the word 'saphar' in Hebrew means to count, reckon, or enumerate, and it also means 'to write', from which the word for writing, 'sephar' or book, is derived. The word 'safar' 'سفر' in Arabic refers to what the word 'book' means, and its connotation is limited to referring to the sacred book. Moreover, the word 'Sephiroth' in Hebrew, meaning enumeration, refers to divine attributes[39].

However, **Guénon** sees one of the contradictions of mathematical principles in the statement of the infinite number, as the idea of the number itself is nothing more than a symbol of a lower degree of existence, referring or symbolizing a higher degree. This symbolism should

not be taken as clear mental obviousness, as the phrase "infinite number" entails cognitive and methodological contradictions. The number is a quantifiable quantity, while the infinite is an idea that is not subject to enumeration or definition. Talking about an infinite number is, in itself, a rejected contradiction. Therefore, the impossibility of the reality of the infinite number necessarily means the negation of the attribute of absoluteness from every mathematical value. **Guénon** supports his opinion by citing a statement attributed to **Leibniz**, in which he says the existence of the infinite number is impossible: "I do not accept the inherent existence of the infinite number, although I acknowledge that the plurality of things exceeds every definite number, or rather exceeds every numeral.[40]"

For **René Guénon**, the symbolism of numbers is not a logical symbolism based on inferential logic; rather, it is metaphysical symbolism. This symbolism uses numbers as symbols for truths that are higher than merely material truths that can be understood through limited mathematical reasoning. Numbers serve as metaphysical symbols par excellence. For instance, zero points to a metaphysical truth that we express in metaphysical language as "non-existence." It transcends the existential mathematical statement that is confined to quantitative value. In metaphysical principles, symbols rise above quantitative description, as expression in metaphysical language moves beyond the constraints of sensory and intellectual quantitative restriction, entering the realm of the absolute, the realm of non-restriction and indefiniteness.

The multiplicity in the metaphysical realm only refers to the various degrees of the manifestation of the Absolute: "When we speak in this context of an uncountable multiplicity, we must always take into consideration that the intended indeterminacy surpasses all numbers, as well as everything that can be directly associated with quantity, such as when we talk about spatial or temporal indeterminacy, which also only refers to the conditions of our own world.[41]" **Guénon** connects the symbolism of numbers with the beliefs found in Jewish Kabbalah and denies that this relationship was transmitted to Jewish traditions through Neoplatonism. On the contrary, he strongly refutes the idea prevalent in modern Western thought that attributes all influences on the course of human thought to Greek origins. Modern scholars; in his opinion, have overlooked the impact of the Alexandrian school, whose majority of thinkers were Jewish, on human heritage.

Guénon believes that the exclusivity and self-isolation of Judaism, as evident in the teachings of Kabbalah, suggest that the influence of Greek thought on Judaism is unjustified, and perhaps the opposite is true. In Kabbalistic teachings, numbers play an important role in Jewish thought, as numbers are an intrinsic characteristic of the Hebrew language, which inherited them from its original roots. This observation also nearly applies to the Arabic language, given the significant similarities and correspondences between the two languages. The relationship between Semitic languages and numbers does not justify the influence of these languages by Greek thought. If this relationship is found in Greek thought, represented by the Pythagorean school—which was not purely philosophical but had an indoctrinationalapproach making it closer to religious thought than philosophy—it suggests that this relationship is a characteristic associated with esoteric teachings rather than exoteric texts[42].

Many historians of philosophy believe that **Pythagoras** himself may have been influenced by Eastern cultures he encountered during his numerous travels to Persia and Egypt. However, in **Guénon's** view, this influence is not certain because the Pythagorean school contains a set of ideas that were deeply rooted in the Greek environment. Many of **Pythagoras's** teachings reflect

the religious spirit known in Greece, particularly in the mystery religions, especially the Orphic religion.

The focal point of this comparison between Jewish Kabbalah and Pythagoreanism according to **Guénon** is the symbolism of numbers, which formed the basis of a science related to sacred numbers or '*numerology*'. This science was associated with the calculation of letters and phrases to interpret religious texts, interpretations that are linked to the secretive practices of rituals and ceremonies associated with religious forms. Both Jews and Pythagoreans believed in the existence of properties of letters and numbers that influenced the understanding of the world and hence the ability to control its phenomena, including the hidden phenomena beyond the sensory world. These ideas were widespread in Eastern civilizations in general, among Indians, Chaldeans, Syrians, Egyptians, and others. Perhaps the transmission of these ideas to Judaism occurred primarily through language rather than cultural interaction, as both the Hebrew and Arabic languages derive historically from the same linguistic roots, namely Syriac. **Guénon** does not rule out the influence of Egyptian thought on Pythagoreanism regarding the secretive properties of numbers and their symbolism. This transmission, which accompanied the spread of mathematics and geometry and their development in Greece, starting with **Pythagoras**, who left a clear mark on **Plato's** thought, since both were referring to God as an engineer.

However, the relationship between numbers and letters remains a unique feature of both Hebrew and Arabic together. The association of letters with geometric shapes in these Semitic languages only emerged with the interaction of Hebrews and Arabs with civilized peoples. For instance, **Solomon** enlisted engineers from outside the Hebrews to build the Temple because they were originally nomadic peoples, much like the Arabs in the early days of their state. Meanwhile, **René Guénon** justifies the connection between numbers and letters in a symbolic manner related to sacred religious texts. These two languages have acquired a sense of sanctity from the religious scriptures that were revealed in them. Hence, it was natural for interpreters of these sacred texts to impart sanctity to the letters of these scriptural languages, which contributed to imbuing them with a symbolic and abstract dimension that opens up multiple interpretations. Numbers derived their sanctity from the letters associated with them within the language of the sacred revelation.

The connection between the symbolic significance of numbers and the semantic meanings carried by letters within religious texts was the central theme of Jewish Kabbalistic texts. These texts represent a series of interpretations of the Torah formulated long after the descent of the religious text, after the passage of time had contributed to the migration of meaning from one interpretive station to another[43]. Similar interpretations can be found in the Islamic Arab heritage among many Sufis and esoteric sects, and even in numerous scholarly readings of the Quran, known as numerical miracles in the Quran. This is an idea that we will discuss, if possible, in the fifth chapter of this research.

The Logos and religious text:

In esoteric religious texts, the Logos embodies an intense presence, especially in Hebrew and Christian writings, as most Hermetic studies and spiritual interpretations with Sufi dimensions revolve around it. In Jewish Kabbalistic texts, which represent esoteric and allegorical interpretations of Jewish beliefs contained in the Old Testament of the Holy Scriptures, a new kind of knowledge is opened and established that cannot be reached through

superficial reading of the Torah texts. This knowledge lays the foundation for building a Gnostic mysticism, representing another manifestation of the Logos.

Conversely in Christian beliefs, according to **G. Gusdorf**, **Clement of Alexandria** saw that true philosophy is nothing other than the intellect inspired by God to humanity, manifested in the sacred scriptures and embodied in the person of Christ. The true sage is the Christian who achieves the perfection of ethical life through religious consciousness, and in brief, when the redeemed Christian becomes the true knower[44].

John's Gospel begins with the phrase: "In the beginning was the Word," and the Word in the Gospel terminology is associated with the Logos, which signifies both thought and speech together. It refers to the divine intellect expressing the presence of potentialities, which manifest through the continuous process of creation of beings. Or as **René Guénon** puts it, "realized in existing through a series of potentialities, considered as eternal essences in themselves. Creation is the result of the act, as well as its manifestation or external proof, and thus the world is a divine language understood by those who comprehend it." "Cœlienarrantgloriam Dei" - "The heavens declare the glory of God.[45]"**Guénon** cites a statement by **George Berkeley** where he says that the world is nothing but: "the language of the infinite mind when speaking to finite minds.[46]" However, he refutes **Berkeley**, who considers this language as a set of arbitrary symbols, in reality, as **Guénon** asserts, "there is nothing arbitrary even in human languages, for every sign must originally have a natural harmony and consonance between the symbol and what it refers to, or the idea it denotes. For indeed, all ancient traditional religions agree that the symbols of things correspond to their essential truths that they signify.[47]"

Every contemplation based on a divergent reading of religious text is a bold attempt to delve into the depths of the sacred experience, a task beyond the capabilities of all literary genres to adequately describe. This experience, commonly referred to by **Rudolf Otto** as "the experience of the sacred" or "Le numineux," and termed by **René Guénon** as spiritual realization, signifies a profound encounter with the divine.

Conclusion:

In Gospel studies, and even until the late Reformation period, the crucial question among exegetes was the nature of the relationship between the Gospel texts of the Old and New Testaments. **Rudolf Bultmann** considered myth to be more than just imagery; rather, he viewed the language of myth anthropologically[48], as an understanding of human existence founded and defined by the action of an external, paradoxical force in the world. In this sense, the interpretation of existence is inherent to the conception of existence itself, or as foundational to being. Based on this premise, the understanding of selfhood becomes possible, and the distinction of each experience becomes conceivable through its authenticity. According to **Bultmann**, the texts of the New Testament constitute a discourse permeated by a duality of contradictions, such as the duality of human submission to a strict system of determinations on one hand, and human agency in creating one's own actions by will; humans as prey to sin as an inevitable fate and humans as solely responsible for their sin; humans as entirely conditioned beings or as independent entities, and so forth, all contradictions contained within the texts of the holy scripture.

According to this perspective, **Bultmann** believes that the teachings of the Gospel texts escape the authority of myth by presenting fundamental propositions that allow for the negation

of myth as a worldview. The Gospel word is an address to humanity 'without resorting to myth.'"We should interpret the duality of New Testament myths in existential terms," which is the only way that helps us understand Christian life in its distinctiveness and particularity. Liberating the word "address" from the authority of myth means that we have come to understand human existence solely with God, which is the true way of life through which we recognize the nature of the relationship that arises between humans and God, reaching its peak in what can be called a relationship of mystical annihilation. Rejecting this divine belonging, in **Bultmann's** view, means rejecting separation from the world and earthly life[49], while the act of existence means, for the believer, that the other life has indeed become present. The divine presence manifests through human action, which is the annihilation in what is divine.

However, the discourse emerging from the Gospel texts, the discourse directed towards humanity, narrates historical events. Here, the historicity of the texts captures renewed meanings and implications, given their belonging to the historical dimension. These texts do not merely express temporal events of worldly nature; rather, their historicity is viewed as a comprehensive form of various coincidences, deriving their significance from the discourse, from the Word and its promises. Faith in the Word is considered the foundation of religious existence. The crucifixion of Christ in the New Testament is not regarded as a historical event except under the condition of Christ's existence. The historical event ascends to the highest levels of cosmic dimension, and under this condition, it becomes an event. The mythical personality and the historical human being are embodied in the person of Christ. Through myth, history finds its individual significances, while the event of the crucifixion provided the meaning. "Mythological discourse interprets the significant importance inherent in the historical event."

In systematic religions, sacred texts exert an influence over believers that makes them firmly believe in the divine origin of these texts. This influence lies in what **Ricœur** called "le logos du mythos" — the logic of myth,and for hermeneutic criticism to form a new understanding, it must remove this influence, separate it from the subjective influences resulting from mental rigidity and closed dogmatic thinking. Any interpretation that does not exclude the influence of the sacred text on the interpreter is a deficient interpretation, a directed interpretation, laden with the burdens of preconceived ideas that no understanding is free from. The hoped-for hermeneutic process should "accelerate the process of demythologization to re-actualize the symbolic dimension as an original sign of the sacred. Thus, hermeneutics contributes to the revival of philosophy when it intersects with symbols. It is one of the ways of renewal." Although this idea may seem like a logical paradox, **Ricœur** believes that demythologization is also a recharging of thought, for which symbols are a natural result, in what he previously called "the circle of faith and understanding." This encompasses the entire hermeneutic process.

The process of demythologization must encompass all the fundamentals of communication between the absolute and the finite. This communication cannot exist outside the "circle of faith and understanding," a circle that remains intact only with the presence of its three elements: revelation, sacred texts, and prophecy. Any communication lacking these elements is merely theoretical and does not rise to the level of building social doctrines or influencing the direction of a particular sect or historical sects, as seen in the attempts of surrealist philosophers like **Ibn Tufail** in the story of *Hayy ibn Yaqzan.*

Paul Ricœur called for the demythologization of sacred texts to transcendor strip awaythe symbols from any accretions and reach the purest symbol that serve as the original sign of the

sacred. This is because the sacred texts, both Old and New Testaments, were formulated over a vast temporal distance that separated the times of revelation and documentation. Consequently, many readings of the Bible's texts have raised the idea of their historicity. However, according to **Friedrich Strauss**, falling into such a mistaken notion stems from neglecting to understand ancient writings in the spirit of the era in which they were written. If these texts spoke with the same philosophical precision as contemporary writers, they would either express genuine divine providence or be mere false assumptions. But since they come from a primitive stage, before the advent of philosophy, they speak of divine intervention according to the ideas and language of ancient times. Just as there is no miracle to be amazed by, there is also no deception to be uncovered within the sacred texts. Instead, we should translate the languages of the early centuries into our current languages. As long as humanity has not penetrated the depth of the truths of things, it attributes to supernatural forces or the intervention of higher beings all lofty ideas, great solutions to human problems, and even discoveries, especially the image-laden illusions, considering them divine acts under the influence of the state they are subjected to. This leads contemporary readers to assume the mythic or historical nature of the texts.

This proposition, imposed by the nature of the texts of the Bible in both Testaments in Western thought, and the language that carried the content of revelation with its symbols and signs in the corpus of the Old and New Testaments, suggests that they have either lost their power due to the temporal gap between the time of revelation and the time of writing, or due to the transition and migration of meaning from the symbols of the language of revelation to the symbols of the written language. This is what **Ricœur** called the 'moment of forgetting'. This moment constitutes a critical historical turning point in the trajectory of the corpus of the sacred text in both the Old and New Testaments.

Entering the time of the birth of language, as **Ricœur** said, is aresort to the depths of thought in search of the first original truth. Reaching the original symbol must begin from the fullness of language, where meaning resides and is characterized by continuous presence, where the spoken text aligns with the written text. Therefore, the process of returning writing to its oral origins aims to revive a relationship that lost its direct, lively quality when it was transformed into written phrases. Even though this second life does not express a relationship of exact correspondence, it is similar to the relationship contained in the communicative dialogue that took place between the revelation and the prophet. Returning the written to the spoken is a process of second creation that surpasses the stage of sacred writings in their second form (written form) after originally being oral transmissions through "revelation," which necessitates, according to a faith-based necessity, the existence of a recipient claiming "prophethood."

The true understanding of the symbol must necessarily take its starting point from within language, where "what can be said has indeed been said in a form or another." The historical moment for the philosophy of the symbol, then, is the moment of forgetting, which is simultaneously a moment of reconstruction or reshaping. It is the moment of forgetting the sacred symbols that used to be transmitted through religious teachings disseminated by the instructors within the sacred religious teachings themselves. It is the moment of humanity losing itself as a possession of the sacred. This idea, as pointed out by **René Guénon** when he spoke of the sacred language par excellence or the living language, as he called it, and contrasted it with the language of translation or the dead language.

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