



The Myth of the Eternal Return: Or, Cosmos and History

Mircea Eliade

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This founding work of the history of religions, first published in English in 1954, secured the North American reputation of the Romanian émigré-scholar Mircea Eliade (1907-1986). Making reference to an astonishing number of cultures and drawing on scholarship published in no less than half a dozen European languages, Eliade's *The Myth of the Eternal Return* makes both intelligible and compelling the religious expressions and activities of a wide variety of archaic and "primitive" religious cultures. While acknowledging that a return to the "archaic" is no longer possible, Eliade passionately insists on the value of understanding this view in order to enrich our contemporary imagination of what it is to be human. Jonathan Z. Smith's new introduction provides the contextual background to the book and presents a critical outline of Eliade's argument in a way that encourages readers to engage in an informed conversation with this classic text.

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