



FACULTEIT DER GEESTESWETENSCHAPPEN
Afdeling Theologie en Religiestudies

**HISTORY OF HERMETIC PHILOSOPHY
AND RELATED CURRENTS**

REPORT 1999-2000



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1. Introduction

In 1999 the University of Amsterdam founded a new subdepartment (“leerstoolgroep”) devoted to the history of hermetic philosophy and related currents, with a focus on the period from the 15th century to the present. This was an innovative academic venture without historical precedent: no (sub)department devoted to this field of research yet existed in any other university in the world, nor does any exist at the time of writing. Before presenting the reader with an overview of the subdepartment’s activities during the first 16 months (September 1999 - end of 2000), it may be useful to recapitulate how, and for what reasons, it was brought into existence.

The subdepartment “Geschiedenis van de Hermetische Filosofie en verwante stromingen” (henceforth: GHF) was made possible by a financial donation by Mrs. Drs. R. Basten (Antwerpen). Being personally interested in hermetic philosophy and its historical development, during her own philosophy studies at the University of Amsterdam she had been disappointed to discover that no such subject was being taught. Given the existence in Amsterdam of the renowned *Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica*, which contains the world’s most complete collection of hermetic source materials and a wealth of related documents, the continuing lack of a teaching curriculum and academic research program in this field was all the more surprising. Mrs. Basten’s motivation in making the donation was to make it possible for the University of Amsterdam to fill this hiatus. The donation was made to an independent Foundation newly created to this end, which has signed an agreement with the University enabling the latter to create a new subdepartment and appoint the necessary staff. The agreement stipulates under art. 10 that the GHF research and teaching programs will be “independent of any worldview”, thus ensuring the professional detachment and neutrality essential to academic research. Likewise, and for the same reason, all appointments take place under the full responsibility of the University of Amsterdam. The Foundation consists of five members: Mr. W.A. Koudijs (chairman), Prof.dr. R. van den Broek (secretary), Mr. F.C.M. Tilman (treasurer), Mrs. Drs. R. Basten, and Dr. S.J. Noorda. It was decided that the new subdepartment would become part of the department “Theology and Religious Studies” of the Faculty of Humanities.



2. Appointments

The available budget allows for the appointment of one full professor, two lecturers/researchers (“Universitair Docenten”), a secretary, and two Ph.D. students. Except for the last category, the process of appointing people to these positions has been completed during the period covered in this report.

Early in 1999 an advertisement for a full professorship “History of Hermetic philosophy and related currents” was published in the major Dutch newspapers, and circulated internationally. A committee of seven members, chaired by the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities Prof.Dr. K. van der Toorn, selected a number of candidates from among the responses received. The committee decided to appoint Dr. W.J. Hanegraaff as of september 1, 1999. Hanegraaff gave his inauguration speech “Het einde van de hermetische traditie” a few months later, on January 18, 2000.

Wouter J. Hanegraaff (1961) studied music at the municipal Conservatory of Zwolle, where he received his diploma classical guitar in 1987; and “Algemene Letteren” at the University of Utrecht, where he received his doctoral diploma *cum laude* in 1990. From 1992 to 1996 he worked on his Ph.D. dissertation at the Study of Religions department of the University of Utrecht, in the function of research associate (“OIO”) subsidized by the Dutch Organization for Scientific Research (NWO). His dissertation *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* was completed and defended *cum laude* within the period of appointment, on November 30, 1995; it was published by E.J. Brill and State University of New York Press. From 1996 to 1999 Hanegraaff worked as a research associate at the Study of Religion department of the University of Utrecht, on a research project about the history and theory of magic. He is co-editor of three books (*Female Stereotypes in Religious Traditions*, with R. Kloppenborg [1995]; *Gnosis and Hermeticism from Antiquity to Modern Times*, with R. van den Broek [1998]; *Western Esotericism and the Science of Religion*, with A. Faivre [1998]); editor of several academic monograph series and journals; and co-organizer of three international congresses (Amsterdam 1994; Mexico City 1995; Durban 2000). From early on Hanegraaff’s scholarly activities have been motivated by an agenda of promoting the development of the study of western esotericism into a professional discipline of academic research.

Beginning on December 1, 1999, Mss. Drs. Andréa Kroon was appointed as staff assistant (combining secretarial and editorial tasks).



Mrs. Drs. Andréa A. Kroon (1968) was trained as an art historian, and specialized in the material culture of Freemasonry in the low countries in the 18th and 19th centuries. She has been an editor of several art journals and has been involved in the management of art historical projects. Among other things, she organized a successful conference “Kunst en westerse esoterie” in the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (December 11, 1999). Her combination of organizational, administrative and editorial skills, as well as a solid familiarity with the field of study, made her an appropriate choice for this position.

These two positions having been filled, an advertisement for two lecturers/researchers (“universitair docenten”) was widely circulated by means of internet and e-mail media, and using available mailing lists of scholars in the field. Fifty-two responses were received. A committee of five members, chaired by W.J.Hanegraaff, selected four candidates for a personal interview. The committee unanimously decided to appoint Dr. J.-P. Brach for the position “Renaissance-18th century” and Mr. O. Hammer for the position “19th-20th centuries”. Brach has begun his work on september 1, 2000. Hammer, whose Ph.D. dissertation was due to be defended in October 2000, has been appointed as of January 1, 2001.

Jean-Pierre Brach (1956) studied philosophy at the University of Paris IV Sorbonne, receiving his doctoral diploma in 1978. Since 1983 he has been connected as *Chargé de Conférences* to the 5th section (religious studies) of the *École Pratique des Hautes Études* (Sorbonne). In 1994 he received the E.P.H.E.'s *Diplome de l'École* – equivalent to a Ph.D. – with a critical annotated edition and translation of Guillaume Postel's *De admirandis numerorum platoniorum secretis* (1549). In the same year he published *La symbolique des nombres*, which was translated into Italian in 1999. Since 1981 Brach has published extensively in various scholarly journals, concentrating in particular on Christian kabbalah and the history of number symbolism, of which he is considered the world's foremost specialist. He is editor of two academic journals in the field.

Olav Hammer (1958) studied various subjects in the humanities and social sciences between 1976 and 1980, and History of Religions at the University of Lund intermittently from 1989 onwards (while continuing to work fulltime in business). From 1997 to 2000 he worked on his Ph.D. dissertation *Claiming Knowledge: Prolegomena to a Study of the Strategies of Epistemology in the Modern Esoteric Tradition* (publ. by E.J. Brill in 2001). By that time he had already written two other books in Swedish: *På spaning efter helteten: New Age – en ny folketro?* [The Quest for Holism: New Age – A New Folk Belief?] (1997) and *Profeter mot strömmen: Essäer om mystiker, medier och profeter i modern tid* [Prophets against the Current: Essays on Mystics, Mediums and Prophets in the Contemporary World] (1999), edited two anthologies, and written about a dozen articles. Hammer's scholarly interests are



focused on the development of western esoteric currents from the second half of the 19th century to the present.

During the first twelve months, the GHF teaching and research activities have thus been carried out by Hanegraaff alone. He was joined by Brach in september 2000.



3. Teaching

3.1. Teaching Program

The courses taught by GHF are part of the program “Moderne religiositeit” of the department Theology and Religious Studies, but can also be followed by students from other departments or faculties, as well as by so-called “contract students” (who are not enrolled as regular students in a university study program, but enroll only for specific courses). The GHF teaching program “Western Esotericism”, as developed in the period 1999-2000, consists of three consecutive modules which together make up a so-called “minor” [cf. publicity folder: Appendix I]:

I. *Introduction to Western Esotericism* (“Hermetica I”).

[7 study points; 2nd trimester; lecture format; written examination with open questions]

This module provides a historical overview of the development of “western-esoteric” religious currents in the hellenistic culture of late antiquity, Christian culture, and modern society in the west. The emphasis lies on developments from the Renaissance to the present, i.e. from the revival of the hermetic philosophy in the second half of the 15th century up to and including the New Age movement. Particular attention is given to the question of how western-esoteric religiosity relates to Christianity, on the one hand, and to modernity, on the other.

II. *Sources of Western Esotericism* (“Hermetica II”).

[7 study points; 1st trimester; seminar format; examination based on a public presentation and a written paper. Hermetica I is compulsory for following this second as well as the third module]

In this module, the history of western-esoteric currents is approached by way of close reading of primary sources. Following the same main lines of historical development presented in the first module, representative texts are critically studied and discussed. The students thereby receive training in the various problems involved in working with primary sources, as well as the critical use of secondary sources in interpreting and analyzing their contents. The program of this module also includes a working visit to the *Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica* or another major library relevant to the field.



III. *Themes in Western Esotericism* (“Hermetica III”).

[7 study points; 2nd trimester; seminar format; examination based on a public presentation and a written paper]

The basic format is the same as in Hermetica II, but in order to enable a more in-depth study of source materials, texts are selected not chronologically but thematically. The theme is decided upon year by year, taking into account the suggestions and special interests of the given group of students. Some possible examples of a theme are e.g. number symbolism, reincarnation, magic, rituals, secrecy, sexual symbolism, creative imagination, spiritual techniques, and so on.

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At the time of writing, preparations are underway for the introduction of the B.A./M.A. system after the summer 2002. It is expected that the minor “Western Esotericism” will be continued as part of the new B.A. program “Religious Pluralism in the West”. In addition, there are plans for developing an additional English-language M.A. program which will make it possible for students from the Netherlands or abroad to specialize in the study of western esotericism on the M.A. level. These plans will be further developed in 2001.

3.2. Level of participation and results

- In the periode under discussion, W.J. Hanegraaff has taught Hermetica I in the second trimester of the academic year 1999-2000. 35 students participated in this course, 19 of whom eventually continued to do the examination and/or re-examination; 16 of them passed.
- Almost all the students (15 out of 16) who had passed Hermetica I decided to continue with Hermetica II in the first trimester of the academic year 2000-2001, also taught by Hanegraaff. At the time of writing a few of them have written their paper and passed.
- Apart from these courses belonging to the program “Western Esotericism”, in the first trimester of the academic year 2000-2001 Hanegraaff also taught the propaedeusis course “Inleiding Wereldgodsdiensten” [Introduction Religions of the World]. 20 students participated in this course, 9 of whom continued to do the examination; 6 of them passed at the first examination.



4. Research

4.1. Research Program

The Faculty of Humanities has three interdepartmental Research Institutes. A preliminary GHF Research program has been accepted by the Research Institute Culture and History (ICH), under the general title “Western Esotericism and Modernization”. It is in fact one of the two subprograms falling under the heading of a general program co-ordinated by W.J. Hanegraaff, with the title “Het ‘andere van de Rede’ en de modernisering van de westerse cultuur” (the other subprogram being “Magic and Disenchantment”, co-ordinated by Prof.dr. M. Gijswijt-Hofstra).

Western Esotericism and Modernization. Coörd: Prof.dr. W.J. Hanegraaff.

Short description

To date, there exists a widespread tendency to perceive “esoteric” or “occultist” traditions as inherently anti-modern, since they espouse “mystical” or “irrational” attitudes that are considered incompatible with rationality and science. This tendency is closely connected with the idea that such traditions are essentially static and conservative, in contrast to the dynamic and progressive nature of modernity. Recent research demonstrates such assumptions to be over-simplistic, and incompatible with the evidence. During all the phases of the emergence of modernity one finds, rather, a complex involvement of western esoteric currents with mainstream developments that are seen both as reflections of, and as contributions to, the emergence of the modern world (see, e.g., the relation between the Hermetic revival and Renaissance humanism, alchemy and the scientific revolution, esoteric Freemasonry and the Enlightenment, Spiritualism and nineteenth-century positivism, modern Theosophy and evolutionist anthropology, Mesmerism and the rise of psychology, New Age religion and postmodern consumer culture). The complex and often paradoxical interrelation between western esotericism and the history of modernity cannot be understood without a critical contextual approach which recognizes that traditions associated with “magic and the occult” are subject to continuous change and creative innovation under the impact of new social and historical conditions, rather than being stale “revivals” or mere residues of past ages. Against this background, the



work of the research group will focus on clarifying the nature of the connections between western esotericism and various aspects of the process of modernization.

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In his general policy statement the Academic Director of ICH, Prof.dr. M.B. Pranger, emphasizes that 'integral to [ICH's] approach is the concept that a researcher in the humanities is essentially an individual whose particular strength lies in being above all an intellectual, free to develop his or her own research agenda' (*Research in the Humanities*, University van Amsterdam 2000, p. 7). The GHF approach to its research program is in line with this principle. Each of the permanent staff members of GHF will be working on one or more projects falling within the general perimeters of the research program. The present outline of projects should be understood as flexible; it may be adapted depending on the actual development of the research.

Below, the main projects are ordered roughly according to historical periods involved. Of course each project will have its offshoot consisting of articles published in academic journals or collective volumes. In addition, the GHF staff members may publish occasional papers on various subjects apart from the main research projects, as well as book reviews. Although O. Hammer has been appointed as of January 1, 2001, his projects have already been included in this overview.

Lodovico Lazzarelli and Giovanni "Mercurio" da Correggio (W.J. Hanegraaff)

During the period under discussion, Hanegraaff has been working on a critical edition and annotated English translation, with a very substantial Introduction, of the hermetic writings of the 15th-century poet and mystic Lodovico Lazzarelli (1447-1500) and his spiritual "master", the hermetic prophet Giovanni "Mercurio" da Correggio. The project emerges from a collaboration with an independent neolatin specialist, Mr. R.M. Bouthoorn. At the time of writing the project is approaching its completion; the resulting book is expected to be published before the end of 2001 in the "Gnostica" series of Peeters publ., Louvain, under the title *Lodovico Lazzarelli (1447-1500): The Hermetic Writings and Related Documents*.



Number Symbolism in the Renaissance (J.-P. Brach)

This project will likewise be finished during 2001, and will result in a small book about the various traditions of number symbolism in the Renaissance, and the relevance of arithmology to different areas of 16th-century thinking.

Theory and Practice of Prayer in Christian Kabbalah (J.-P. Brach)

In the context of the Christian kabbalah in the Renaissance period, prayer has a variety of dimensions that have not been systematically investigated before. The theory and practice of prayer involves the problematic relation between prayer and spell, and hence between religion and magic at the crossroads of Greek, Hebrew and Christian traditions of philosophy and mysticism. This complex domain also involves some aspects of the derivative use of divine and angelic names, for example in traditions of theosophic medicine. The works of seven or eight of the most important Christian kabbalists in the period 1480-1600 will be investigated from this perspective. The project will take up several years after 2001, and will result in a major monograph on the subject.

Textual Editions on Number Symbolism (J.-P. Brach)

Four important texts belonging to the tradition of arithmology will be edited and/or translated: John Peckham, *De numeris mysticis* (ca. 1290); Giordano Bruno, *De monade, numero et figura* (1591); Francesco Patrizi, *De pythagoricis numeris* (1594); Max Théon, *Les nombres* (ca. 1900) [in collaboration with C. Chanel].

Emanuel Swedenborg's Arcana Caelestia (W.J. Hanegraaff)

A contract has been signed with Swedenborg Press for writing the Introduction to the new English translation of Emanuel Swedenborg's *magnum opus*, as part of the prestigious long-term project known as the New Century Edition of the works of Swedenborg. Under the terms of the contract, the Introduction – which, AC being a multi-volume work, will have a length comparable to a small book - will have to be finished after the summer of 2003. The Introduction will discuss the *Arcana Caelestia*, its sources and historical backgrounds, and its reception. The latter aspect implies a thorough investigation of, among others, Friedrich Christoph Oetinger and Immanuel Kant in their relation to Swedenborg. As such – Oetinger being the greatest Christian theosopher of the 18th century, and Kant needing no further



introduction – this project provides a welcome entrance to the general problem area of the relation between Christian hermetic *Naturphilosophie* and the German *Aufklärung*.

Justinus Kerner and his Patients (W.J. Hanegraaff)

Research that has been done over the last couple of years, and which has already resulted in several long articles in English and German about the German poet and physician Justinus Kerner and the Seeress of Prevorst, should be continued so as to result in a book with the provisional title *Kerner's Women: Trance and Possession in Romantic Germany*. This book will discuss not only the Seeress of Prevorst Friederike Hauffe, but also two of Kerner's lesser-known patients, Christiane Käßlinger and Magdalena Grombach. These materials will be placed in a historical and theoretical context so as to result in a monograph about the general problem of the role of somnambulant trance and possession in the context of the Hermetic *Naturphilosophie* of German Romanticism. Research on this project will have to be done simultaneously with that for the Swedenborg Arcana Caelestia project, which has a binding deadline attached to it. By what time the Kerner project can be completed will therefore depend partly on how the Swedenborg project develops.

Swedenborg's Influence in the 19th and 20th Centuries (O. Hammer, W.J. Hanegraaff)

This project follows naturally from the Swedenborg Arcana Caelestia project. But while the latter concentrates specifically on Swedenborg's *magnum opus*, this project will trace the influence of Swedenborgianism more generally. One aspect of this influence is the linkage between Swedenborgianism and Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy, which is Hammer's main research subject (see below). For this reason it is natural for Hammer and Hanegraaff to collaborate in this project. A specific deadline cannot be given at this point. The Swedenborg Arcana Caelestia project and the Anthroposophy project (see next) will take priority over the present one.

Anthroposophy: Esoteric Doctrine and Practice (O. Hammer)

The leading question motivating this project is how modern esoteric movements adapt to living in a culture with respect to which they are, in a number of respects, deviant. Anthroposophy was selected as a testcase because it is a particularly good example of a highly successful modern esoteric movement, which has nevertheless been peculiarly neglected by academic research. Anthroposophy has generated several related forms of praxis, including



the Waldorf schools, biodynamic farming, and anthroposophical medicine; in a historical as well as analytical study of them, good use can be made of theoretical concepts developed in fields such as ritual studies, medical anthropology, the study of narrative, and the sociology of religion. The project is expected to result in a major monograph, which will include a study of Rudolf Steiner's development and oeuvre, a thematic investigation of Steiner's doctrinal system, the development of Anthroposophy as a movement and praxis, its reception, and the interaction between Anthroposophy and the general culture. The project will start in January 2001 and will take several years to complete.

Anton Webern: Modern Music and Hermetic Naturphilosophie (W.J. Hanegraaff)

Most of the research for this project on the interaction between music and esotericism in the work of the great Austrian composer Anton Webern has already been done. Depending on the development of the other projects, it will be published as a medium-sized book for the Dutch market (provisory title *Het hermetisch zwijgen*).



4.2. Research Output.

W.J. Hanegraaff (1999-2000)

Het einde van de hermetische traditie, Vossiuspers AUP: Amsterdam 1999. 38 pp.

‘Defining Religion in Spite of History’, in: Jan G. Platvoet & Arie L. Molendijk (red.), *The Pragmatics of Defining Religion: Contexts, Concepts and Contests*, Royal E.J. Brill: Leiden/Boston/Köln 1999, 337-378.

‘La fin de l’ésotérisme? Le mouvement du nouvel âge et la question du symbolisme religieux’, in: *Symboles et mythes dans les mouvements initiatiques et ésotériques (17^{ème}-20^{ème} siècle)*, Archè Edidit/La Table d’Emeraude: Paris 1999, 128-147.

‘New Age Spiritualities as Secular Religion: A Historian’s Perspective’, *Social Compass* 46:2 (1999), 145-160.

‘Some Remarks on the Study of Western Esotericism’, *Theosophical History*, March 1999, 223-232; also published in *Esoterica* 1:1 www.esoteric.msu.edu (1999).

‘Sympathy or the Devil: Renaissance Magic and the Ambivalence of Idols’, *Esoterica* 1:2 www.esoteric.msu.edu (1999).

‘Gnosis II’, in: *Metzler Lexikon Religion*, Bd. I, Metzler Verlag: Stuttgart 1999, 506-510.

‘De leer van *A Course in Miracles*’, *Streven* 66:11 (1999), 1002-1012.

‘New Age Religion and Secularization’, *Numen* 47:3 (2000), 288-312.

‘A Woman Alone: The Beatification of Friederike Hauffe née Wanner (1801-1829)’, in: Anne-Marie Korte (ed.), *Women and Miracle Stories: A Multidisciplinary Exploration*, Royal E.J. Brill: Leiden/Boston/Köln 2001.

‘Versuch über Friederike Hauffe: Zum Verhältnis zwischen Lebensgeschichte und Mythos der “Seherin von Prevorst”’, Teil I, *Suevica: Beiträge zur Schwäbischen Literatur- und Geistesgeschichte* 8 (1999/2000), 17-38.

‘De geschiedenis en wetenschappelijke benadering van de westerse esoterie’, *Kunstlicht* 21:1 (2000), 3-9.

Gary Tomlinson, “Music in Renaissance Magic: Toward a Historiography of Others” (Chicago & London 1993), review in *ARIES* 22 (1999).

Andreas Kilcher, “Die Sprachtheorie der Kabbala als ästhetisches Paradigma: Die Konstruktion einer ästhetischen Kabbala seit der frühen Neuzeit” (Stuttgart 1998), review in *ARIES* 22 (1999).



Arthur McCalla, "A Romantic Historiosophy: The Philosophy of History of Pierre-Simon Ballanche" (Leiden etc. 1998), review in *ARIES* 22 (1999).

Marc van der Poel, "Cornelius Agrippa: The Humanist Theologian and his Declamations" (Leiden etc. 1997), review in *ARIES* 22 (1999).

Jacob Böhme, "Werke" (F. van Ingen, ed.), Frankfurt a.M. 1997, review in *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 53:2 (1999).

J.-P. Brach (2000)

'Guillaume Postel et l'Orient messianique'. In: M.A. Amir-Moezzi & J. Scheid (eds.), *L'Orient dans l'histoire religieuse de l'Europe: L'invention des origines* (Actes du colloque international organisé à Paris par l'École Pratique des Hautes Études et l'Université hébraïque de Jérusalem), Brepols: Turnhout 2000, 121-130.

René Guénon (P.L. Zoccatelli, ed.), *Écrits pour Regnabit*, Nino Aragno/Archè: Turin/Milan 1999. *Politica Hermetica* 15 (2000), 246-248.

Claudio Mutti, *Eliade, Valsân, Geticus e gli altri: La fortuna di Guénon presso i Romani*, Edizioni del Veltro: Parma 1999. *Politica Hermetica* 15 (2000), 242-245.



5. Other Activities

5.1. Lectures and Congress Participation

W.J. Hanegraaff has participated in five international conferences, to four of which he contributed a paper and in the context of one of which he organized a symposium (see 5.3). He was further invited to give a lecture at Reed College (Portland, Oregon), combined with a round of individual coaching sessions with doctoral students.

J.-P. Brach participated in four conferences organized by French academic institutions, as well as one international congress.

W.J. Hanegraaff

Conference *Hermetismus als Kulturphänomen in der frühen Neuzeit*, Göttingen, October 1999 (no paper).

Conference *New Age and Globalization*, Seminar RENNER, Copenhagen 16-17 November 1999 (invited lecture “Prospects for the Globalization of New Age: Spiritual Imperialism versus Cultural Diversity”).

American Academy of Religion, Annual Meeting, Boston 20-23 November 1999 (session paper “Beyond the Yates Paradigm”).

Reed College, Portland (Oregon), 5 April 2000 (invited public lecture: “Beyond the Yates Paradigm: The Study of Western Esotericism between Counterculture and Postmodern Complexity”).

Palladian Academy, 2nd Symposium, Graz (Austria), June 2000 (paper “Lodovico Lazzarelli and Giovanni ‘Mercurio’ da Correggio”).

XVIIIth Congress International Association for the History of Religions (I.A.H.R.), Durban (South Africa), August 2000, symposium “Western Esotericism and Jewish Mysticism” (paper “Lodovico Lazzarelli’s Use of Jewish Mystical Sources”).



J.-P. Brach

École supérieure des arts décoratifs de Strasbourg, 12 January 2000 (Invited lecture “La symbolique des nombres: Perspectives philosophiques et historiques”).

Ésotérisme et Protestantisme, Symposium École Pratique des Hautes Études, 3 March 2000 (Paper “Johann Pistorius (1546-1608): médecine théosophique et kabbale chrétienne”).

Centre d'Études supérieures de la Renaissance, Tours, 12 March 2000 (Lecture [with A. Faivre] “La kabbale chrétienne en tant qu'aspect de l'émergence de l'éésotérisme occidental moderne au début de la Renaissance”).

La religion des maçons: De l'éésotérique au religieux, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 10 May 2000 (Lecture [with J.-P. Laurant] “La maçonnerie entre religion de substitution, ésotérisme et sécularisation”).

International Association for the History of Religions (I.A.H.R.), 18th Quincentennial Congress, Durban (South-Africa), 7 August 2000 (Lecture “Christian Kabbalah”).



5.2. Editorial Activities

During the period of discussion the GHF staff members have been involved as editors in a number of journals, book projects and series

W.J. Hanegraaff :

- Editor (with R. Edighoffer and A. Faivre) of *Aries: Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism* (publ.: E.J. Brill, Leiden/Boston/Köln)
- Editor (with J.-P. Brach, R. van den Broek, A. Faivre) of *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism* (forthcoming with E.J. Brill, Leiden/Boston/Köln)
- Editor (with J.A.M. Snoek) of *Western Esotericism and Jewish Mysticism* (forthcoming)
- General Editor of “Studies in the History of Religions (*Numen* Book Series)” (publ.: E.J. Brill, Leiden/Boston/Köln)
- Editor (with G.W. Trompf) of “Gnostica: Texts & Interpretations” (publ.: Peeters, Louvain)
- Member editorial board of *Esoterica* www.esoteric.msu.edu
- Member European editorial board of *Religion* (publ.: Academic Press)
- Member editorial board of *Journal of Contemporary Religion* (publ.: Carfax)
- Member board of editorial consultants of *Nova Religio* (publ.: Seven Bridges Press)

Jean-Pierre Brach:

- Editor of *Politica Hermetica* (publ.: L'Âge d'Homme)
- Editor (with R. van den Broek, A. Faivre, W.J. Hanegraaff) of *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism* (publ.: E.J. Brill, Leiden/Boston/Köln)
- Member editorial board of *Aries* (representative French-speaking countries)
- Member editorial board of *Esoterica* www.esoteric.msu.edu



5.3. Lecture and conference organization

- *Public lecture Claire Fanger*

On Friday, 26 May 2000, Dr. Claire Fanger (University of Western Ontario, Canada) gave a public lecture organized by GHF. The title was “Autobiography of a Medieval Necromancer: John of Morigny’s *Book of Visions* and the Authority of Personal Experience”. Fanger is a specialist of medieval magic, whose research into the ritual magical practices of the “clerical underworld” (R. Kieckhefer) is considered groundbreaking. These practices are of particular relevance to understanding the continuity between medieval magic in Jewish as well as Christian contexts, and the new types of *magia naturalis* that developed in the hermetic context of the Renaissance.

- *Western Esotericism and Jewish Mysticism* (org.: W.J. Hanegraaff & J.A.M. Snoek). Symposium in the context of the 18th quinquennial congress of the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR), Durban, South Africa, 5-12 August 2000.

The IAHR is the world’s largest organization for the study of religions, and organizes a general congress every five years. In 1995 W.J. Hanegraaff, A. Faivre and K.-C. Voss organized an innovative symposium “Western Esotericism and the Science of Religion” at the 17th Congress, Mexico City; the proceedings were published in 1998 (A. Faivre & Wouter J. Hanegraaff [eds.], *Western Esotericism and the Science of Religion: Selected Papers presented at the 17th Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions, Mexico City 1995* [Gnostica 2] Peeters: Louvain 1998). The initiative was continued in Durban 2000 in the form of this second symposium on western esotericism, this time concentrated on the connections with Jewish mysticism. It may be said without exaggeration that this symposium was an extraordinary success. It turned out to be the largest one in the entire congress, thereby ensuring excellent exposure and publicity for the study of western esotericism as a new field of research in the study of religions (as a result, W.J. Hanegraaff was invited to present the field in the prestigious *New Approaches to the Study of Religion* [ed. Peter Antes, Armin W. Geertz & Randi Warne], De Gruyter forthcoming 2002). There was a general feeling among the participants that the symposium represented a new departure that might prove to be of historical significance in the development of the field. The selected proceedings will be edited by the organizers, and are expected to be published in 2002 or 2003.



Papers: Kocku von Stuckrad, 'The Beginning of a Mutual Enrichment: Jewish Mystical Discourse and Hermetic Esotericism in Late Antiquity'; Annine van der Meer, 'The Harran of the Sabians in the First Millennium A.D.: Cradle of a Hermetic Tradition?'; Wouter J. Hanegraaff, 'Lodovico Lazzarelli's Use of Jewish Mystical Sources'; Jean-Pierre Brach, 'Christian Kabbalah'; Susanna Akerman, '*Der Löwe aus der Mitternacht* and Johannes Bureus' Rosicrucian Papers'; Arthur Versluis, 'Jacob Böhme and Kabbalah'; Albert Roodnat, 'J.B. van Helmont's Concept of Butler's Stone and Middle-Life'; Allison Coudert, 'Seventeenth-Century Natural Philosophy and Esotericism at the Court of Sulzbach'; Garry Trompf, 'Esoteric Newton and the Kabbalists' Noah: Natural Law between Mediaeval and Modernity'; Olle Hjern, 'Esoteric Christianity in Sweden: Emanuel Swedenborg, the Last Judgment and the New Age'; Jane Williams-Hogan, 'Emanuel Swedenborg and the Jewish Kabbalah: Organic or Syncretic Relationship?'; Tomas Mansikka & Nils Holm, 'Philaethes and Swedenborg: August Nordenskjöld and the Revival of Utopian Alchemy'; Marsha Keith Schuchard, 'Judaized Scots, Jacobite Jews, and the Development of Kabbalistic Freemasonry'; John Collett, 'The Integration of Kabbalah with Other Religious Ideas in Albert Pike's *Morals and Dogma*, 1871'; Henrik Bogdan, 'Kabbalah and Western Esoteric Rituals of Initiation'; Marco Pasi, 'British Occultism and Kabbalah: From the Golden Dawn to Israel Regardie'; Yuri Stoyanov, 'Enochic Apocalypticism and Mysticism in Some Currents of Modern Western Esotericism'; Jan Snoek, 'Influence of Kabbalism on Freemasonry?'; Jean-Pierre Laurant, 'The Nineteenth Century reads Kabbalah'; Ana Maria Binet, 'Jewish Mysticism and Western Esotericism in the Works of a Portuguese Poet, Fernando Pessoa'; 'Colette Rayment, "Hiroshima and the Emanations of Glory"; Antoine Faivre, 'Concluding Address'.

Study Group "ARIES – Netherlands"

Six years ago W.J. Hanegraaff took the initiative for a study group in the field of western esotericism. It was conceived as a Dutch branch of the French *Association pour la Recherche et l'Information sur l'Ésotérisme* (A.R.I.E.S.). It has developed into a stimulating and continually expanding group which meets regularly every month and a half to discuss research. The membership consists of persons (academics, incl. Ph.D. students, and private researchers) who are studying aspects of western esotericism from a scholarly perspective. ARIES – Netherlands used to meet in Utrecht; but has moved to Amsterdam since the autumn of 1999. There have been regular meetings during the period under discussion.



6. Looking to the Future

At the time of writing, GHF is nearing the completion of its “building-up” phase. One Ph.D. student has been appointed, and it is expected that a second one will be appointed in the near future. With O. Hammer having joined the staff as of January 1, 2001, the team is therefore almost complete.

It is the ambition of GHF to become an exemplary center of teaching and research, and as such to play a pioneering and inspirational role in the present academic professionalization of the field of research covered by its title, “History of Hermetic Philosophy and Related Currents”, otherwise known as “Western Esotericism”. Research and teaching on a high level is obviously the basis and starting point for any such ambition; and the individual qualities and commitment of the staff members guarantee that this goal can be attained. With respect to research programs, the reader is referred to section 4.1. With respect to teaching, in addition to the 3-module minor described in 3.1., a complete 2-year MA program or trajectory “Mysticism and Western Esotericism” (in collaboration with the subdepartment “History of Christianity”) is in preparation, which will start after the summer 2002. The teaching will be in English, and is therefore expected to attract foreign as well as Dutch students; there is good reason for optimism in this respect, all the more so since an MA program of this kind is unique in the world. Experience during the period 1999-2000, in the forms of letters and emails that have reached GHF, has confirmed that the interest among foreign as well as Dutch students is considerable. More information on the MA program will be made available in the Report over the year 2001.

In addition to the standard tasks of teaching and research, GHF is involved or hopes to be involved in a number of initiatives, which are listed below.

Collaboration with the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica.

This research library, founded by J.R. Ritman and located in the center of Amsterdam, is generally considered unique. It holds the world’s largest collection of incunables and related source materials in the field of Hermetic philosophy, as well as an invaluable collection of secondary literature. Connected to the BPH is the J.R. Ritman research institute headed by the renowned specialist of Rosicrucianism Dr. C. Gilly.

The intention exists to create an Amsterdam Platform for Hermetic Studies, as a context for collaboration between the BPH and GHF. This the platform has not yet been officially



formalized, further details about the precise nature of the collaboration cannot be given at this moment. The potential of such collaboration is, however, beyond doubt. It is hoped and expected that more information will be made available in the Report over 2001.

Website

Not least in view of the development of the MA program “Mysticism and Western Esotericism”, but also in view of the various other GHF initiatives, it will be important to develop a professional website. After the “building-up” period will have been completed, this will become one of the priorities.

Aries

Since January 2001, GHF is the editorial basis of *Aries: Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism*, published by Royal E.J. Brill Academic publishers (see Appendix II). *Aries* is the continuation – as a new series with a strongly revised editorial formula – of the trilingual journal *ARIES* (Association pour la Recherche et l’Information sur l’Ésotérisme) founded by R. Edighoffer and Antoine Faivre in 1985. It is now edited by the Chair for “History of Hermetic Philosophy and Related Currents” (University of Amsterdam) and the Chair “Courants Ésotériques et mystiques dans l’Europe moderne et contemporaine” (École Pratique des Hautes Études, 5^e section, Sorbonne, Paris). W.J. Hanegraaff has joined the founders as third editor of the journal; J.-P. Brach and O. Hammer have joined the Editorial Board as consultants for the French-speaking and the Scandinavian domain respectively.

Aries aspires to become the internationally recognized podium for academic investigation and intellectual discussion in the field. The journal publishes articles and book reviews in four languages (English, French, German, Italian), each article being followed by a summary in another language.

Gnostica

The book series “Gnostica: Texts & Interpretations” was founded in 1997 by W.J. Hanegraaff, G.W. Trompf (Univ. of Sydney) and the late John Cooper. It focuses on the publication of scholarly books on “gnostic, hermetic and theosophical” currents, in particular textual editions and translations. It is expected that the series will be expanded and further developed over the coming years.



Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism.

Much attention will also go to a large project that was started a couple of years ago and is now definitely taking shape. This concerns the publication of a standard reference work entitled *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, to be published by Royal E.J. Brill academic publishers. The GHF staff members W.J. Hanegraaff and J.-P. Brach have been at the origin of this project together with the two other editors R. van den Broek and A. Faivre. Ca. 160 international scholars are involved as authors of contributions to this project. The great majority of the entries have now been received and the editorial process is in full swing.

Durban Congress Proceedings

W.J. Hanegraaff will be collaborating with Dr. J.A.M. Snoek (University of Heidelberg) on editing the Proceedings of the IAHR symposium “Western Esotericism and Jewish Mysticism” (see section 5.3).

Congress and Colloquium

Dr. K. von Stuckrad (University of Bremen) intends to organize a congress in collaboration with W.J. Hanegraaff, Prof. M. Neugebauer-Wölk (University of Halle) and Prof. A. Faivre (E.P.H.E., Sorbonne) entitled *Die Esoterik als pluralistische Komponente europäischer Religionsgeschichte*. This theme coincides excellently with the planned BA and MA programs religious studies at the University of Amsterdam, which will likewise be characterized by a focus on religious plurality in western culture. In preparation for this congress, GHF plans to organize a small colloquium or pre-conference in Amsterdam, in 2001 or 2002, for which von Stuckrad, Neugebauer-Wölk and Faivre will be invited as speakers.

Lectures and Congress Activities in 2001.

W.J. Hanegraaff

- May 1: invited public lecture and seminar at Arizona State University (Phoenix, U.S.A.).
- May 3, participation in the *36th International Congress of Medieval Studies* (Kalamazoo, U.S.A.).
- June 11: invited public lecture at the Université de Lausanne (Switzerland).



- September 28-29: invited lecture at the congress *Autour de Frances A.Yates*, organized by the Association pour la Recherche et l'Information sur l'Ésotérisme, Sorbonne, Paris (France).
- October 5-6: invited lecture at the conference *The Hermetic Imagination in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, University of California, Los Angeles (U.S.A.).
- November 9: invited lecture at the congress *Theology in the 21st Century*, University of Louvain (Belgium).

J.-P. Brach

- May 3, participation in the *36th International Congress of Medieval Studies* (Kalamazoo, U.S.A.).
- September 28-29: invited lecture at the congress *Autour de Frances A.Yates*, organized by the Association pour la Recherche et l'Information sur l'Ésotérisme, Sorbonne, Paris (France).
- November 15-16: invited lecture at congress on the Italian Renaissance, Université de Besançon (France).

O. Hammer

- May 22: invited lecture at the University of Karlstad (Sweden).
- May 25: invited lecture Conference *Religion and Media*, organized by Nederlands Genootschap voor Godsdienstwetenschap, Kapellerput (Netherlands).



APPENDICES

- I. Publicity Folder for the Minor “Westerse esoterie”.
- II. Information Aries: Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism.
- III. Information “Gnostica: Texts & Interpretations”.



Academic Publishers



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Aries

Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism

Editors: Roland Edighoffer (University of the Sorbonne, Paris), Antoine Faivre (École Pratique des Hautes Études, Sorbonne, Paris) and Wouter J. Hanegraaff (University of Amsterdam)

Aries is the first professional academic journal specifically devoted to a long-neglected but now rapidly developing new domain of research in the humanities, usually referred to as “Western Esotericism”. This field covers a variety of “alternative” currents in Western religious history, including the so-called “Hermetic Philosophy” and related currents in the early modern period; Alchemy, Paracelsianism and Rosicrucianism; Christian Kabbalah and its later developments; Theosophical and Illuminist currents; and various occultist and related developments during the 19th and 20th centuries, up to and including popular contemporary currents such as the New Age movement.

Aries is a peer-reviewed journal publishing articles and book reviews in English, French, German and Italian.

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GENERAL INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS

Aries is edited by the Chair for “History of Hermetic Philosophy and Related Currents” of the University of Amsterdam and the Chair “Courants Ésotériques et Mystiques dans l’Europe Moderne et Contemporaine” of the École Pratique des Hautes Études (Sorbonne), Paris.

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Aries welcomes articles and book reviews on all aspects of the study of esoteric currents in modern and contemporary western culture. Contributions focusing on earlier periods (antiquity, middle ages) will be considered if clearly relevant to the study of modern and contemporary western esotericism. “Western esotericism” is understood as including the revival of hermetism and the so-called “occult philosophy” in the early modern period as well as its later developments; alchemy, paracelsianism and rosicrucianism; christian kabbalah and its later developments; theosophical and illuminist currents; and various occultist and related developments during the 19th and 20th centuries. *Aries* concentrates on historical rather than sociological research, but encourages interdisciplinary approaches including the use of social-science methodologies within a historical framework. While critical scholarship is very welcome, *Aries* is not a podium for religious or ideological apologetics or polemics.

Editors:

Prof. Roland Edighoffer

(University of Paris-III-Sorbonne-Nouvelle)

Prof. Antoine Faivre

(École Pratique des Hautes Études, Sciences Religieuses, Sorbonne, Paris)

Prof. Dr. Wouter J. Hanegraaff

(University of Amsterdam)

Editorial Board/International Consultants:

Dr. Jean-Pierre Brach (University of Amsterdam)

[consultant French-speaking countries; brach@hum.uva.nl]

Dr. Olav Hammer (University of Amsterdam)

[consultant Scandinavian countries; o.hammer@hum.uva.nl]



Dr. Arthur McCalla (Reed College, Portland, Oregon)

[consultant U.S.A./Canada; McCalla@directory.reed.edu]

Prof. Dr. Monika Neugebauer-Wölk (University of Halle)

[consultant German-speaking countries; gcpfv@mlucom6.urz.uni-halle.de]

Mr. Marco Pasi (École Pratique des Hautes Études, 5th section, Paris)

[consultant Italy; marco.pasi@wanadoo.fr]

Dr. Jan Snoek (University of Leiden/University of Heidelberg)

[consultant Netherlands, Belgium and U.K.; jsnoek@stad.dsl.nl]

Dr. G. Szönyi (University of Szeged)

[consultant Eastern-European countries; geszonyi@hstud.u-szeged.hu]

Prof. G.W. Trompf (University of Sydney)

[consultant Australia/New Zealand; trompf.editorial@religion.usyd.edu.au]

Editorial Address:

**Aries, c/o Hilda Nobach. Faculty of Humanities, Dept. Theology and Religious Studies.
Oude Turfmarkt 147, NL-1012 GC Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Tel. +31 20 525 3571.
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As a rule, articles should be between 5.000 and 10.000 words. A disk plus three prints of the manuscript (double spaced, including bibliography and footnotes; with broad margins; printed on one side of the paper only) should be sent to the Editorial Address. The text should be as “flat” as possible; please emphasize words, phrases and titles of books by underlining, but avoid boldface and italic.



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News rubric

Since *Aries* tries to keep its readership informed about recent and upcoming events relevant to the study of western esotericism, the editors welcome announcements of conferences, exhibitions etc.

The news rubric also provides room for short presentations of academic dissertations. Such presentations should be submitted by the author, and the main text should not exceed 500 words. They must include information on how interested readers may secure a copy of the dissertation.

Books received will be mentioned in *Aries*.



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