



FACULTEIT DER GEESTESWETENSCHAPPEN  
*Afdeling Theologie en Religiestudies*

**HISTORY OF HERMETIC PHILOSOPHY  
AND RELATED CURRENTS**

**REPORT 2003**



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## **1. Introduction**

The most important new development in 2003 is that, after an initial starting-up phase in the academic year 2002-2003, since the first semester of 2003-2004 the subdepartment “Geschiedenis van de Hermetische Filosofie en verwante stromingen” (GHF) has been offering a complete MA program “Mysticism and Western Esotericism”, which has been attended by Dutch as well as international students. In this report we give an overview of the recent development of the subdepartment, its new projects, and its plans for the future.

## **2. Personnel**

As indicated in the previous annual report, Dr. habil. Kocku von Stuckrad was appointed as lecturer/researcher “Western Esotericism in the Early Modern Period” on April 1, 2003, as successor of Dr. Jean-Pierre Brach. For his personal information, see the Report 2002.

As likewise indicated in the previous report, Mss. Drs. Roelie van Kreijl was appointed as Ph.D. research associate on March 1, 2003.

In the spring of 2003, Dr. Olav Hammer indicated that he was applying for several new positions of Senior Lecturer/Researcher (“Universitair Hoofddocent”) and full Professor Religious Studies that had simultaneously become available at a number of universities in Denmark. Each of these positions represented a clear promotion in rank, and were highly attractive to him and his wife for personal reasons as well (family connections). Hammer’s applications proved successful, and as of January 1, 2004, he has been appointed Senior Lecturer/Researcher Comparative Religions at the University of Southern Denmark, Odense. The members of GHF wish to congratulate Olav Hammer with this new and well-deserved position. During the time that he has been working in Amsterdam he has shown himself an excellent colleague, who rapidly developed in adapting to the specific requirements of the subdepartment. In addition to his standard teaching load and a steady output of published research, he also earned the appreciation of his colleagues in Religious Studies by taking on the position of coordinator of the Research Master programs. His great sense of humour made it particularly pleasant for everybody to work with him. Undoubtedly his move to Denmark will not mean the end of his collaboration with members of GHF, whether focused on Western esotericism or on the study of religions more generally.



After the appointment had become official, a job application procedure was initiated to fill the vacant position. In response to an advertisement circulated by means of internet, email media, and available mailing lists of scholars in the field, twenty-one candidates applied for Hammer's succession. A committee of five members, chaired by W.J. Hanegraaff, selected two candidates for a personal interview followed by a teaching session in one of the MA seminars. With general consent, the committee decided to appoint Mr. Marco Pasi (Italy/France).

M. Pasi (1968) was born in Monza, Italy, and studied philosophy at the Università degli Studi in Milan (Laurea *cum laude* in 1994). He subsequently took his D.E.A. in Religious Studies at the École Pratique des Hautes Études (Sorbonne) in Paris (1996, with mention "très bien"). On June 26, 2004, he will defend his dissertation *La notion de magie dans la mouvance occultiste anglaise (1875-1947)* at the E.P.H.E., under the direction of Prof. A. Faivre. Pasi has a solid reputation among scholars of esotericism as one of the best specialists of 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century esoteric currents, and of magical currents in particular. He has taught in these domains at the University of Milan and at the E.P.H.E. Since 1996 he has produced a steady output of articles and book reviews published in Italian, French and English. His monograph *Aleister Crowley e la tentazione della politica* (FrancoAngeli: Milan 1990) is scheduled to appear in a French translation in the near future (L'Age d'Homme: Lausanne).

Marco Pasi is expected to start working at GHF after the summer 2004.

### **3. Teaching**

#### **3.1. Teaching Program**

The minor "Westerse esoterie" has been continued without major changes. "Hermetica I" was given by Hanegraaff, as before. Since the vacancy created by the departure of J.-P. Brach had not yet been filled, GHF Ph.D. associate Drs. Marieke van den Doel was asked to give the module Hermetica II, with "Western esotericism and the visual arts" as guiding theme. She has devoted herself to this considerable task with great dedication and success, and by her efforts has earned the gratitude of students and of the subdepartment. Hermetica III was given by Hammer, who also taught the general propaedeusis course "Inleiding Religies van de wereld".

As for the MA, in the first semester of the academic year 2003-2004 the program has for the first time been available in its entirety. Courses on the MA level have been given by Hanegraaff (Western Esotericism and the Quest for Enlightenment II; Western Esotericism and [Post]Modernity), Hammer (Occult Trajectories I), and von Stuckrad (Renaissance



Esotericism II). In addition, Hammer has taught the general MA course “Key Publications Religious Studies” in the first semester.

### **3.2. Level of participation**

The general pattern remains the same. The introductory course Hermetic I attracts an average of 35-40 students; and like in the previous years, it again attracted a relatively large amount of contract students. A smaller but significant part of these students continues to follow Hermetica II and III, and a few of them move on to the MA level as well. Seminars on the MA level remain rather small for the time being (albeit with considerable growth), but very positive was the participation this year of four foreign students (one Italian, three Americans). In line with the fact that the Italian student is in fact working on her Ph.D. in her own country, and all three Americans come from colleges belonging to the top 10 in the USA, all four of them turned out to be of very high quality.

**N.B. Precise quantitative results could not be made available in time for the circulation of this preliminary version of the Annual Report. The secretary of GHF hopes to have them ready shortly before the meeting on april 20.**

## **4. Research**

### **4.1. Research Program**

The project “Emanuel Swedenborg’s *Arcana Caelestia*” (Hanegraaff) has been completed, in the form of a manuscript (116 pages) that will appear as the Introduction to the new edition of the *Arcana Caelestia* in 2005.

Due to the departure of Olav Hammer, the projects “Charismatic Leadership in Esoteric Sacred Biography” (Hammer) and “Swedenborg’s Influence in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries” (Hammer and Hanegraaff) have been discontinued.

Von Stuckrad has joined the research program with two projects:

The shorter project “Western Esotericism – a methodological and historical description” was completed during the year 2003 and will be published in September 2004 as a book-length introduction to Western esotericism in the German language (*Was ist Esoterik? Kleine*



*Geschichte des geheimen Wissens*, Munich: C. H. Beck, appr. 285 pp; English translation is already negotiated with Equinox Publisher, London).

The longer-term project “Discursive Transfers: Interferences between Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Pagan Esotericism in Early Modern Europe” will run from 2003 to 2007 and is described as follows:

This project takes up recent discussions about religious pluralism and the nature of European history of religions. Using a discursive methodological approach—thus including social, political, juridical, economic, and other factors—the project’s focus is on interferences and common themes between different religious traditions in the early modern period. Esotericism is a particularly good example to show the transfers of knowledge and semantics between different religions and from one cultural system to another. Often, these transfers are strong elements of active differentiation, polemic, and rhetoric of identity, being an indication of a ‘hot’ pluralistic situation. One aim of this project is to show the importance of Jewish, Muslim, and ‘Pagan’ traditions for the shaping of early modern Esotericism. From the fifteenth through the eighteenth century these religions were actively involved in cultural processes. To illustrate these involvements, a double strategy will be applied. On the one hand, biographies of paradigmatic persons will be scrutinized that stand on the interface between different traditions, like Guillaume Postel who was either a Christian priest, a scholar of Islam and Jewish Kabbalah, and the prophet of a new age of the reign of Mary. On the other hand, the analysis of important cultural concepts will lead to a better understanding of the interferences between and the common interests of different religious traditions. One such concept is ‘Apocalypticism,’ because the charging of history with meaning and the subsequent application of astrology is of paramount importance for Christian, Jewish, and Muslim discourses alike. Another concept is ‘revelation,’ being a rhetoric device to construct superior historical narratives and religious identities on a pluralistic field of discourse. This project—from 2003 through 2007—will result in several articles and a major monograph.

## **4.2. Research Output.**

### W.J. Hanegraaff

‘Versuch über Friederike Hauffe: Zum Verhältnis zwischen Lebensgeschichte und Mythos der “Seherin von Prevorst”’ Part II, *Suevica* 10 (2003).

‘How Magic Survived the Disenchantment of the World’, *Religion* 33:4 (2003), 357-380.

‘Westerse esoterie en de mythe van het oosten: Het voorbeeld van reïncarnatie’, in: Aart Mak & Otto Sondorp (eds.), *In s’hemelsnaam: Dialoog tussen oud en nieuw geloof*, Meinema: Zoetermeer 2003, 91-109.



Kirsten J. Grimstad, *The Modern Revival of Gnosticism and Thomas Mann's Doktor Faustus*, Rochester NY 2002. Review in: *Literature & Theology* 17:1 (2003), 105-107.

### O.Hammer

'On the Construction of History', in: Nils G. Holm & Ulrika Wolf-Knuts (eds.), *Time and Humanity*, Åbo: Åbo Akademi 2003, 15-34.

'Esotericism in New Religious Movements', in: James R. Lewis (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2003, 445-465.

### K. von Stuckrad

*Einführung in die Religionswissenschaft: Gegenstände und Begriffe* (Reihe Beck Studium), Munich: C.H. Beck 2003. 230 pp. [in collaboration with Hans G. Kippenberg]

*Schamanismus und Esoterik: Kultur- und wissenschaftliche Betrachtungen* (Gnostica: Texts and Interpretations 4), Leuven: Peeters 2003. VII + 337 pp.

*Geschichte der Astrologie: Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, Munich: C.H. Beck 2003. 413 pp. (English translation scheduled for 2005 with Equinox Press, London).

'Discursive Study of Religion: From States of the Mind to Communication and Action', *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 15 (2003), 255-271.

'From Ancient Religions to Modern Scholarship: The Work of Hans G. Kippenberg', *Religious Studies Review* 29:3 (2003), 261-266.

'Relative, Contingent, Determined: The Category "History" and its Methodological Dilemma', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 71:4 (2003), 905-912.

'Religionswissenschaftliche Überlegungen zum religiösen Pluralismus in Deutschland: Eine Öffnung der Perspektiven' [in coll. with H.G. Kippenberg], in: Hartmut Lehmann (ed.), *Multireligiosität im vereinten Europa: Historische und juristische Aspekte* (Bausteine zu einer Europäischen Religionsgeschichte im Zeitalter der Säkularisierung 1), Göttingen: Wallstein 2003, 145-162.

'Le chamanisme occidental moderne et la dialectique de la science rationnelle', in: Robert N. Hamayon (ed.), *Chamanismes* (Revue Diogène), Paris: Presses Universitaires de France 2003, 281-301.

Ronald Hutton, *Shamans: Siberian Spirituality and the Western Imagination*, London 1999. Review in: *Aries* 3:1 (2003), 110-113.

Anne-Charlott Trepp & Hartmut Lehmann (eds.), *Antike Weisheit und kulturelle Praxis: Hermetismus in der frühen Neuzeit*, Göttingen 2001. Review in: *Aries* 3:2 (2003), 266-269.

Henri-Paul Francfort & Roberte N. Hamayon (eds.), *The Concept of Shamanism: Uses and Abuses*, Budapest 2001. Review in: *Numen* 50:1 (2003), 119-121.



## 5. Further Activities

### 5.1. Lectures and Congress Participation

Hanegraaff lectured at two international conferences (Esalen Institute; Milton Keynes) and one Dutch conference (Leiden), contributed to a study group (Amsterdam), and gave two popular lectures (Nijmegen; Amsterdam). Hammer lectured at three international conferences (Åbo; Milton Keynes; Erfurt). Von Stuckrad lectured at two international conferences (Erfurt; Atlanta).

#### W.J. Hanegraaff

'Human Potential before Esalen: Visionary Techniques and Experiences in the History of Western Esotericism', Conference: *On the Edge of the Future: Locating Esalen in the Histories of American Religion, Psychology, and Culture*, Esalen Institute (California), 20.3.2003.

Keynote Lecture 'Swedenborg and New Age Religion', Conference: *Alternative Spiritualities and New Age Studies*, Milton Keynes, 31.5.2003.

'De geschiedenis van de Vrijmetselarij in relatie tot de geschiedenis van de Westerse esoterie', Conference: *Vrijmetselarij in Nederland. Een kennismaking met de wetenschappelijke studie van een geheim genootschap*, University Leiden, 14.3.2003.

'De zieneres van Prevorst', Werkgezelschap "Psychische Stoornissen en Creativiteit", Universiteit van Amsterdam, 17.1.2003.

'Religie tussen de wal en het schip: Hermetica en Westerse esoterie', Studiedag *New Age & Westerse esoterie*, Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen, 24.9.2003.

'Religie versus theologie', Lezingencyclus *Godvergeten*, Universiteit van Amsterdam, 14.12.2003.

#### O. Hammer

'On the Construction of History', Conference: *Cultural Conceptions of Time*, Åbo, 3.3.2003.

'New Age and the Discursive Construction of Community', Conference: *Alternative Spiritualities and New Age Studies*, Milton Keynes, 31.5.2003.

'Syncretism and the Relation between Science and Esotericism', Conference: *Annual Meeting of the DVRG "Religion(en) im Konflikt"*, Erfurt, 20.9.2003.





### K. von Stuckrad

‘Communitas: Environmentalist Activity and Ritual Theory’, Conference: *Annual Meeting of the DVVRG “Religion(en) im Konflikt”*, Erfurt, 20.9.2003.

‘Religion as Communication: Do we need a New Paradigm?’, Conference: *Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion*, Atlanta (Georgia), 22.11.2002.

### **5.2. Editorial Activities**

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-in-chief (in collaboration with A. Faivre, R. van den Broek, J.-P. Brach) of *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism* (forthcoming with E.J. Brill, Leiden/Boston/Köln, 2005)
- 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](http://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)

### O. Hammer

- Member editorial board of *Aries* (representative Scandinavian countries)

### K. von Stuckrad

- Editor (with Gustavo Benavides) of *Religion and Society*, Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter.



## **6. New and Current Projects**

The projects mentioned in earlier annual reports (GHF website; *Aries*; *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*) have been continued in 2003.