

Occult Trajectories I

Magic and Modernity

Dr. Marco Pasi

Thursday 10:00-12:45

Location: OMHP, E108

(with the exception of the first class, see schedule below)

Study guide

Code: RS8151

Credits: 12 ECTS

Form: Seminar. Students will present the material included in the reading list. Presentations will be followed by discussions led by the instructor.

Conditions of admission (ingangseis): BA Religious Studies, BA Humanities or BA Social Sciences including 30 EC Religious Studies.

Description: The course focuses on different aspects of the historical evolution of western esotericism in the modern period, from the eighteenth century up to the present days. The aim is to follow both the internal development, understood from the specific perspective of the field, and the broader cultural context in which western esotericism has taken shape, in order to understand both the inside logics of esotericism and its responses to external social pressure. Every year a different theme is chosen that offers a unique entry point in this historical development. For this year, the subject will be modern western esotericism and magic. Magic has always been a “problem” in western culture, and some authors have argued that western culture itself has constructed its own identity on the basis of a recurrent anti-magical polemic. Other authors, particularly influenced by Max Weber’s theory on disenchantment, have on the other hand argued that magic began to disappear in the early modern period, being supplanted by a more rational worldview. Magic therefore would not “belong” to the modern world and would only survive as a worn-out superstition. But magic has proved resilient and has not disappeared at all, as the history of western esotericism clearly demonstrates. In recent years, the relationship between magic and modernity has been the object of new interpretations and has been seen in a new light. This new development is very significant for the appreciation of the role of “magic” in the history of modern western esotericism. In the first part of the course methodological aspects in the study of magic will be discussed, first from a general point of view, and then more specifically in relation to the study of western esotericism and modernity. In the following parts, the course will take a more historical, if not strictly chronological, approach, focusing on different moments in the history of “magic” within the context of modern western esotericism. The course will make use of both primary sources and secondary literature.

Teaching goals: While focusing on a single aspect of modern western esotericism, the student will become familiar with the main lines of its historical development. Significant figures, currents and

movements will be mentioned and discussed. The course will also instruct the student to approach the reading material with a critical eye and develop awareness of broader cultural problems related to its origins, transmission, and interpretation.

Test procedure: The course will have two different sources of evaluation, expressed in grades. They consist in: 1) Oral presentations of the reading material during classes; 2) A final paper.

- 1) Oral presentations. Students are expected to deliver at least one oral presentation during the course. The presentations will bear on the reading material for the given class, which may consist in either primary or secondary literature, or both. Presentations will be based on those texts followed by an asterisk in the syllabus. The presentation should last around 20 to 25 minutes. It should contain the following elements: some information about the author and the background of the text (when was it produced?, in which cultural climate and/or historical context?); a short and clear overview of the structure and content of the text (is it divided in parts? what are the main arguments? what is the line of reasoning followed by the author?); a couple of significant quotations that the student considers particularly representative of the main arguments or ideas presented in the text; a critical assessment (this assessment will have different implications whether the text is a primary or a secondary source, but mainly what is required is an evaluation of the text on the basis of the claims it makes or the arguments on which it is based, be they religious or scholarly: are they convincing and/or consistent? do they show weak spots?). Students are strongly advised to use PowerPoint for their presentations. In case PowerPoint is not used, it is obligatory to prepare a handout to be distributed in class before the beginning of the presentation. Presentations will make for 40% of the final grade.
- 2) Final paper. The final paper will bear upon a subject chosen by the student and agreed upon by the lecturer. Students are advised to make an appointment with the lecturer in order to discuss possible subjects at an early stage of the course. The paper will consist of around 5000 words, including footnotes and bibliography. Students are encouraged to discuss themes, literature, and the structure of the paper with the instructor as early as possible. They will have to submit a preliminary outline and bibliography for the paper before the 1st of April. The final version of the paper will have to be submitted before 29 May and will make for 60% of the final grade. Students who will submit their paper after the deadline will have a reduction of one point in their grade for the paper. N.B.: submitted papers will not be heavier than 500 Kb (so, in case you intend to include images, please reduce them to a convenient size!). Papers exceeding this limit will be rejected until they conform to it.

Apart from these two forms of assignment, each student will be required to prepare a written question based on the texts presented during the class. This will not apply to students presenting on that day. The questions will be used during the discussion following the presentations. The questions will have to be sent the day before to the lecturer. Failure to submit a question for more than three times will result in a penalty of 0.5 points on the final grade.

For students who have never followed the BA courses *Westerse esoterie en Religieus Pluralisme* (previously: *Hermetica I*) or *Western Esotericism from the 18th century to the 20th century* (previously: *Hermetica IV*), the reading of one of the following books is also obligatory: Joscelyn GODWIN, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1994; or Wouter J. HANEGRAAFF, *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture*, Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Resits: In case the average of the grades for the presentations and other assignments is insufficient, it is possible to compensate it with an oral exam, which will bear upon the whole of the material read during the course, plus the chosen book for the students who have not followed *Hermetica I* (now *Westerse esoterie en Religieus Pluralisme*) or *Hermetica IV* (now *Western Esotericism from the 18th century to the 20th century*). The final paper cannot be repeated if insufficient.

Practical information: The course is in the form of a seminar. Therefore, even apart from the oral presentations, all students are expected to read the material for every class and to participate actively in the discussions.

Attendance is a requisite for a successful completion of the course, and consequently it will be checked. No more than three classes can be missed. Students who miss more than three classes will not be able to obtain the credit points at the end of the course and will be obliged to repeat it in the following year.

NB: This is a preliminary version of the program. The final version will be made available after the first class, when the schedule for the presentations will be set up.

For all further information, you can contact the lecturer directly at m.pasi@uva.nl.

4 February **NOTE: this is a Wednesday!, class will be from 9.30 to 12.00 in OMHP, room E K01A**

1. Introduction

General introduction, discussion of themes and program, and attribution of the material from the reading list to be presented by the students.

I. PRELIMINARY AND METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

12 February 2. The proper study of magic

Marco PASI, "Theses de magia", *Societas Magica Newsletter*, 20 (Fall 2008), pp. 1-8.

Bernd-Christian OTTO and Michael STAUSBERG, "General Introduction", in: Id. (eds.), *Defining Magic. A Reader*, Sheffield - Bristol (Ct.), Equinox, 2012, pp. 1-15.

Randall STYERS, *Making Magic - Religion, Magic, and Science in the Modern World*, Oxford - New York, Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 25-68.

Peter PELS, "Introduction: Magic and Modernity", in: Birgit MEYER e Peter PELS (eds.), *Magic and Modernity. Interfaces of Revelation and Concealment*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2003, pp. 1-38.

19 February 3. The study of magic and modern Western esotericism

Wouter J. HANEGRAAFF, "How Magic Survived the Disenchantment of the World", *Religion*, 33 (2003), pp. 357-380.

Egil ASPREM, "Magic Naturalized? Negotiating Science and Occult Experience in Aleister Crowley's Scientific Illuminism," *Aries. Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism*, 8:2 (2008), pp. 139-166.

Ronald HUTTON, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 66-111.

II. THE FORMATION OF OCCULTISM

26 February 4. Discourses on magic between the Enlightenment and occultism

Ernst BENZ, *The Theology of Electricity: On the Encounter and Explanation of Theology and Science in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, Allison Park, Pickwick Publications, 1989, pp. 27-44; 93-104.

- Jules DU POTET DE SENNEVOY, *Magnetism and Magic*, London, George Allen & Unwin, 1927, pp. 59-66; 79-88; 96-120.

5 March 5. Eliphas Lévi, E. Bulwer Lytton and the new magic of occultism

Christopher MCINTOSH, *Eliphas Lévi and the French Occult Revival*, London, Rider, 1975, pp. 141-153.

Arthur Edward WAITE, "Biographical and Critical Essay", in: E. LÉVI, *The Mysteries of Magic: A Digest of the Writings of Eliphas Lévi*, Secaucus, University Books, 1974, pp. 1-41.

- Eliphas LÉVI, *Transcendental Magic: Its Doctrine and Ritual*, York Beach, Samuel Weiser, 1999.

12 March 6. In and around the Theosophical Society

John Patrick DEVENEY, *Astral Projection or Liberation of the Double and the Work of the Early Theosophical Society*, Fullerton, Theosophical History, 1997, pp. 1-60.

- Helena Petrovna BLAVATSKY, "The Science of Magic," in: Ead., *Collected Writings*, I, Madras - London: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1988, pp. 134-144.
- Ead., *Isis Unveiled: A Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology*, New York, J.W. Bouton - London, Bernard Quaritch, 1877, II vol., 587-597; pp. 634-640.
- Emma Hardinge BRITTEN, *Art Magic, or, Mundane, Sub-Mundane and Super-Mundane Spiritism*, New York, The Author, 1876, pp. 157-173.

IV. INITIATIC GROUPS

19 March 7. Two initiatic groups: the Golden Dawn and the H.B. of L.

Joscelyn GODWIN, Christian CHANEL, and John P. DEVENEY, *The Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor: Initiatic and Historical Documents of an Order of Practical Occultism*, York Beach, Samuel Weiser, 1995, pp. 40-77.

Alison BUTLER, "Magical Beginnings: The Intellectual Origins of the Victorian Occult Revival", *Limina: A Journal of Historical and Cultural Studies*, 9 (2003), pp. 78-95.

Christopher A. PLAISANCE, "Magic Made Modern? Re-evaluating the Novelty of the Golden Dawn's Magic", *Correspondences*, 2:2 (2014), pp. 159-187.

- Samuel Liddel MacGregor MATHERS, et al., *Ritual Magic of the Golden Dawn: Works by S.L. MacGregor Mathers and Others*, Rochester, Destiny Books, 1997, pp. 47-89.
- William Butler YEATS, "Magic," in: Id., *Essays and Introductions*, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1961, pp. 28-52.

26 March

8. Between mysticism and magic: A.E. Waite

R[obert] A. GILBERT, *A. E. Waite - Magician of Many Parts*, Wellingborough, Crucible, 1987, pp. 11-14; 88-96; 133-141.

- Arthur Edward WAITE, *The Book of Ceremonial Magic - The Secret Tradition in Goëtia - Including the Rites and Mysteries of Goëtic Theurgy, Sorcery and Infernal Necromancy*, London, William Rider & Son, 1911 (repr. : New York, Citadel Press, 1994), pp. xxiii-xliv.
- Id., *Shadows of Life and Thought - A Retrospective Review in the Form of Memoirs*, London, Selwyn and Blount, 1938, pp. 65-75; 95-102.

2 April

No class

V. MAGIC IN 20TH CENTURY ENGLISH OCCULTISM

9 April

9. Aleister Crowley's "Magick"

Marco PASI, "Varieties of magical experience: Aleister Crowley's views on occult practice", *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft*, 6:2 (Dec. 2011), pp. 123-162.

Alex OWEN, "Aleister Crowley in the Desert", in: Ead., *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2004, pp. 186-220.

- ABHAVANANDA [Aleister CROWLEY], "Berashith: An Essay in Ontology, With some Remarks on Ceremonial Magic", in: Id., *Collected Works*, II, Les Plaines, Yogi Publication Society, n.d. [1973], pp. 233-243.
- Aleister CROWLEY, "The Initiated Interpretation of Ceremonial Magic," in: Samuel Liddell MacGregor MATHERS and Aleister CROWLEY, *The Goetia: The Lesser Key of Solomon the King*, York Beach, Samuel Weiser, 1995, pp. 15-19.
- Aleister CROWLEY, *Magick: Book Four Parts I - IV*, York Beach, Samuel Weiser, 1994, pp. 121-149; 241-249.

16 April

No class (ESSWE conference in Riga)

23 April

10. Magic psychologised: Dion Fortune and Israel Regardie

Ronald HUTTON, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 180-188.

- Dion FORTUNE, " Ceremonial Magic Unveiled ", *The Occult Review*, Jan. 1933, 13-24.

- Ead., "The Purpose of Magic", Dion FORTUNE et Gareth KNIGHT, *An Introduction to Ritual Magic*, Loughborough, Thoos Publications, 1997, 134-138.
- Israel REGARDIE, *The Middle Pillar: A Co-Relation of the Principles of Analytical Psychology and the Elementary Techniques of Magic*, Saint Paul, Llewellyn, 1970, i-ix, 13-43.

VI. OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

30 April

11. The birth of sexual magic

John Patrick DEVENNEY, *Paschal Beverly Randolph - A Nineteenth-Century Black American Spiritualist, Rosicrucian, and Sex Magician*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1997, 181-188; 208-236.

Hugh B. URBAN, "Magia Sexualis: Sex, Secrecy, and Liberation in Modern Western Esotericism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, LXXII, 3 (Sept. 2004), 695-731.

Marco PASI, "The Knight of Spermatophagy: Penetrating the Mysteries of Georges Le Clément de Saint-Marcq", in: Wouter J. Hanegraaff and Jeffrey J. Kripal (eds.), *Hidden Intercourse: Eros and Sexuality in the History of Western Esotericism*, Leiden - Boston, Brill, 2008, pp. 369-400.

- Aleister CROWLEY, "Of the Nature of the Gods," in: Francis KING (ed.), *Secret Rituals of the OTO*, London, 1973, 169-183.

7 May

No class

14 May

12. Julius Evola and the UR Group

H. Thomas HAKL, "Die Magie bei Julius Evola und Ihre Philosophischen Voraussetzungen," in: Richard CARON et al. (eds.), *Esotérisme, gnoses & imaginaire symbolique: Mélanges offerts à Antoine Faivre*, Louvain, Peeters, 2001, 415-436.

H. Thomas HAKL, "Julius Evola," in: Wouter J. HANEGRAAFF et al. (eds.), *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, E. J. Brill, forthcoming.

Renato DEL PONTE, "Julius Evola and the UR Group," in: Julius EVOLA et al., *Introduction to Magic: Rituals and Practical Techniques for the Magus*, Rochester, Inner Traditions, 2001, xi-xxxviii.

- Julius EVOLA et al., *Introduction to Magic*, 8-12; 21-25; 41-51; 55-58; 156-159.

21 May

13. Chaos magic(k)

Colin DUGGAN, "Perennial Iconoclasm: Chaos Magick and Contemporary Occultism", MA thesis, University of Amsterdam, Dept. of Religious Studies, August 2009.

- Peter CARROLL, *Liber Null*, Yorkshire, Morton Press 1978.
- Phil Hine, *Condensed Chaos*, Reno, New Falcon Publications 1995.

