HISTORY OF HERMETIC PHILOSOPHY
AND RELATED CURRENTS

REPORT 2015
TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction
2. Personnel
3. Teaching: Program and Levels of Participation
4. Research
   4.1. Research Program
   4.2. Research Output
5. Public Activities
6. Editorial Activities
1. Introduction

This has been a normal year in terms of teaching and research, but there is some concern about the rather sudden decline in student numbers. Having enjoyed a very strong group of international students over several years in succession, the number of students in the Master program dropped quite dramatically and unexpectedly for the academic year 2015-2016. The reasons are unclear: in response to an email inquiry, students who had been accepted but finally did not register for the program reported personal and contingent reasons that show no perceptible structural pattern. Publicity has been normal, and the website functions well. One could speculate that the decline in student numbers might have something to do with the widely publicized financial, organizational, and managerial problems of the Faculty of Humanities and the University of Amsterdam that were at the heart of the revolt of students and academic staff in the spring of 2015. Other possible factors are the steady increase of financial costs for students in combination with a decline of career prospects in the Humanities; while these are a general phenomenon in higher learning, it is possible that choosing a “vocational” field such as History of Hermetic Philosophy and Related Currents is getting more risky. Then again, this year's drop in students numbers might be merely accidental, and the present number of new applications does seem to suggest we may be getting back to normal in the academic year 2016-2017. In any case, we will keep monitoring these developments closely.

Another new development in 2015 was the organizational move of HHP from the Department of Art, Religion & Cultural Studies (KRC) to the new Department of History, European Studies & Religious studies (GER). In combination with a tightening of the Religious Studies program, which is forced to cut expenses, this move may have considerable implications for the future collaboration between HHP and Religious Studies (as well as, potentially, History and/or European Studies). In sum, it seems clear that not just the Faculty of Humanities but the very field of Humanities is going through a process of transition, with outcomes that are impossible to predict but will certainly have implications for HHP.
2. Personnel

There have been no personnel changes in 2015.

3. Teaching: Program and Levels of Participation

1st semester 2014-2015, block 3

Master
Western Esotericism and Its Scholars (W.J. Hanegraaff), 11 students

2nd semester 2014-2015, block 1-2

Bachelor
Western Esotericism from the 18th to the 20th Century (M. Pasi). 8 students

Master
Occult Trajectories I: Magic and Modernity (M. Pasi), 15 students

1st semester 2015-2016, block 1-2

Bachelor
Westerse Esoterie en Religieus Pluralisme (W.J. Hanegraaff). 34 students
Western Esotericism in the Early Modern Period (P.J. Forshaw). 12 students

Master
Contested Knowledge II: Cosmotheism and Disenchantment (W.J. Hanegraaff). 5 students
Renaissance Esotericism II: Occult Philosophies (P.J. Forshaw). 7 students

Other teaching

Master

4. Research

4.1. Research Program

No new projects were started this year (for the currents projects, see description in previous Annual Reports).

4.2. Research Output

Peter J. Forshaw


J. Christian Greer


Wouter J. Hanegraaff


Marco Pasi


Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, Monash University Museum of Art / MUMA, Melbourne, 2015, 6 pp. Text of the brochure for the exhibition with the same title. In collaboration ith Lars Bang Larsen.
Mike A. Zuber


Review of Jacob Boehme, Aurora (Morgen Röte im auffgang, 1612) and Fundamental Report (Gründlicher Bericht, Mysterium Pansophicum, 1620), with a translation, introduction, and commentary by Andrew Weeks, Ambix 62: 1 (2015), 99–100.

5. Public Activities

Peter J. Forshaw

Lectures

“Michael Maier, Emblems and Alchemy”, Conference Interplay: Rethinking Music, Mathematics, and Alchemical Praxis in the Atalanta fugiens (1618), Chemical Heritage Foundation, Philadelphia (USA), 14-15 March.


“Heinrich Khunrath's Amphitheatre of Eternal Wisdom”, Symposium De Grootsheid van de Geest, Amsterdam, the Netherlands, 7 November.

J. Christian Greer

Lectures


Outreach


Wouter J. Hanegraaff

Lectures
“Carl Gustav Jung en Eranos: Een poging to contextualising”, Interdisciplinary Society for Analytical Psychology (IVAP), Driebergen, the Netherlands, 8 February.

“The Great War of the Soul: Carl Gustav Jung’s Liber Novus”, Keynote Lecture, Conference 

“Alan Moore’s Promethea: Counterculturalism and the End of the World”, Conference 
Gnostic Countercultures: Terror and Intrigue, Rice University, Houston, USA, 26-28 March.


“Magic, Trance, and Agnosticism: Jan Platvoet and the Study of Western Esotericism”, Research seminar at the occasion of Jan Platvoet’s 80th birthday, University of Leiden, 9 June.

“Fantastic Religion: Esoteric Fictionality and the Invention of Tradition”, Keynote Lecture, 
Dynamics of Religion: Past and Present, XXIth Quinquennial World Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR), Erfurt, Germany, 23-29 August.

“Emma Hardinge Britten and the Orientalist Imagination”, Invited lecture at Conference 
Theosophy across Boundaries, University of Heidelberg, 24-26 September.

Theosophy and the Arts: Texts and Contexts of Modern Enchantment, Columbia University, USA, 9-10 October.

Conference organization


Marco Pasi

“The Starry Sky Above Me, the Sun Within Me: Metaphorical Loci of Light”. Invited lecture for the seminar “Light (O4 A Materialisation)”, organized by Gabriel Lester for the Academy of Architecture of the Amsterdam School of the Arts, 13 March 2015.

“And Never the Twain Shall Meet: An Examination of the Relationship between the Study of Western Esotericism and ‘Orientalism’”. Paper presented at Western Esotericism and the East: 5th biannual conference of the European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism (ESSWE), Universitie of Riga, Latvia, 16 April 2015.

“Early Forms of Abstract Art and Spiritualism: Georgiana Houghton’s Spirit Drawings”. MADA artforum lecture on the occasion of the opening of the exhibition Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, Monash University Museum of Art (MUMA), Melbourne, 22 April 2015.

“The Study of Western Esotericism: A Short Introduction”. Invited lecture at the Department of Religious Studies, Monash University, Melbourne, 23 April 2015.


“Messianism, Nationalism and Modern Western Esotericism”. Invited lecture, Central European University, Budapest, 28 May 2015.

“Western Esotericism, Alternative Spirituality and Roman Catholicism in Modern Italy”. Paper presented at Dynamics of Religion: Past and Present, XXIth World Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR), Erfurt, Germany, 27 August 2015.

“In search of the origins of Western esotericism”. Invited lecture for the 2nd international Babel colloquium In search of the origins of religion, Ghent, 12 September 2015.

Respondent in the panel “Futurism, Art, and Theosophy” and participation in the final roundtable session of the 2nd Enchanted Modernities conference, Theosophy and the Arts: Texts and Contexts of Modern Enchantment, Columbia University, New York, 10 October 2015.


“Magic and Power”. Invited lecture for the interdisciplinary lecture series of the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies, Academy of Fine Arts, Munich, 15 December 2015.

Interviews

Interview with Mariano Villalba, “Entrevista a Dr. Marco Pasi, Universidad de Amsterdam”, *Newsletter del Centro de Estudios sobre el Esoterismo Occidental de la UNASUR*, 2:2 (March 2015), 13-14.

Mike A. Zuber


Conference organization.

“Alchemy and Chemistry in Sickness and in Health: 6th SHAC Postgraduate Workshop”, Oxford University, United Kingdom, 30 October 2015 (in collaboration with Judith Mawer).

6. Editorial Activities

Peter J. Forshaw

(editor in chief) *Aries: Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism*. Leiden/Boston: Brill
(editorial board) Apocalypticism: Cross-Disciplinary Explorations, Bern: Peter Lang
(editorial board) Correspondences: Online Journal for the Academic Study of Western Esotericism
(editorial board) História Revista
Wouter J. Hanegraaff

(editorial board) *Religion Compass*, Section "New Religions".
(advisory board) *Esoterica* [http://www.esoteric.msu.edu](http://www.esoteric.msu.edu)
(advisory board) *Journal of Contemporary Religion*. Carfax

Marco Pasi

(editorial board) *Politica Hermetica*.
(editorial board) *International Journal for the Study of New Religions*.