

H.E.R.M.E.S.

Newsletter Fall Equinox 2011



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H.E.R.M.E.S.' PURPOSE:

§ 1: To advance and balance the Academic Study of Esotericism.

§ 2: To establish and maintain an international and interdisciplinary Academic Research Society in the field of Esotericism in relation to Religion, Philosophy, Science and Art.

Website: www.h-e-r-m-e-s.org



INTRODUCTION

It is with delight that I hereby introduce our Fall Equinox Newsletter 2011. It contains a short article entitled 'A philosophical comparison between Helena Petrovna Blavatsky's (1831-1891) and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's (1770-1831) concept of Religion'.

The present newsletter also includes an informative conference report by Cecile Wilson on the recent ESSWE3 conference about 'The Visual and Symbolic in Western Esotericism'.

Finally, a comprehensive list of the forthcoming conferences related to esotericism that we have received are also located in the present newsletter.

With best wishes for the coming season and thanks for your support,

Tim Rudbøg, Director of *H.E.R.M.E.S.*



ARTICLES

A philosophical comparison between Helena Petrovna Blavatsky's (1831-1891) and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's (1770-1831) concept of Religion

By Tim Rudbøg

Hegel is known as one of the world's most famous philosophers and Blavatsky as one of the greatest occultists. What is less known is that Hegel actually was very interested in and influenced by the Western esoteric traditions and that Blavatsky was fond of Hegel.¹ This brief article is however not intended to historically discuss Hegel's esoteric background or influence on Blavatsky, but is rather intended to be a brief philosophical discussion of their different perspectives on religion.

In *The Phenomenology of Mind* Hegel situates religion within the phenomenological development of spirit (Geist) and defines it as 'the self-consciousness of absolute spirit as portrayed by finite spirit'². In his 'Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion' he generally develops the concept religion as a movement from the finite to the infinite and further as the consciousness of God or the divine subject³.

HPB⁴ defines religion on a particular level and on a universal level: 1. 'A Religion in the true and only correct sense, is a bond uniting men together – not a particular set of dogmas and beliefs'⁵. 2. 'Now Religion, per se, in its widest meaning is that which binds not only all MEN, but also all BEINGS and all things in the entire Universe into one grand whole'⁶.

From these definitions of religion a contradiction between the two perspectives begin to emerge.

1 See Magee, G. A., Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition.

2 Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, 534. See also Hegel, *Phenomenology*, Vol. 2. 687-689. Hegel *Phänomenologie*, 364-365.

3 Schlitt, *Divine Subjectivity*, 39-40. This book will from now on be called: Schlitt, *DS*.

4 H. P. Blavatsky will from hereon be abbreviated as follows HPB.

5 Blavatsky, *CW*, Vol. X, 161.

6 *Ibid*, 161. It seems that HPB derives this definition from its Latin etymology as re'ligio from the root reli'gare which means to bind as in a bond.

In Hegel's *The Phenomenology of Mind* religion is viewed as a "moment" in the becoming of (absolute) spirit; religion is thus an experience, or more specifically, the experience of 'the self-consciousness of absolute spirit as it is portrayed by finite spirit'⁷ and in Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, where he continues to develop his ideas on 'the concept religion', religion becomes a dialectical relationship between God and finite spirit or human consciousness. This relationship takes place in thought and can thus be called "religious consciousness". Hegel's "philosophy of religion" is therefore a specific thought-process or movement of thought whose special concern is the distinction between the finite self and the "divine other" or God. The result of this dialectic relationship is that finite spirit becomes elevated to the infinite; consequently religion is viewed by Hegel as a movement from finite to infinite⁸. This elevation of finite spirit is actually, on a "macrocosmic level", a part of the overall development of absolute spirit as the divine subject; therefore in Hegel's more speculative understanding religion becomes, not only "religious consciousness", but actually "the consciousness of God". Hegel writes: 'This is the concept of religion, that God knows God self in spirit and that spirit knows itself in God'⁹. In this sense religion on a "macrocosmic level" became the gradual manifestation of God in and through finite consciousness, thus not only an elevation of the finite into the infinite, but also the gradual manifestation of the infinite in the finite or as Schlitt writes

'it was the movement from initial infinite, God, othering God self in the finite and, then, as enriched return taking up the finite into the infinite. This latter or true infinite grounded and made possible the movement of religion as an elevation of finite spirit to the absolute, namely to God as absolute subjectivity'¹⁰.

Hegel thus viewed religion as a "universal" or a circulatory "totality" which develops from a self-

7 Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, 534. See also Hegel, *Phenomenology*, Vol. 2. 687-689. Hegel *Phänomenologie*, 364-365.

8 See Hegel, *Philosophy of Religion*, 89-258, on the conception of Religion.

9 Hegel quote and translation in Schlitt, *DS*, 42.

10 Schlitt, *DS*, 40.

motivated (spiritual) impulse through “othering itself” in a natural dialectics of spirit relating itself to itself (both as infinite and finite). On a “microcosmic level” the “philosophy of religion” can be viewed as the thinking through of the notion God¹¹ as inclusive divine subjectivity¹², but on a “macrocosmic level” Religion in relation to the concept God becomes the “self-positing concept of God” or god’s own dialectical process.

With HPB religion is rather that which binds entities together in unity both on a particular and universal level. This uniting bond seems to be nothing other than the ‘one eternal truth’¹³. Religion as truth is thus that which binds the universe together as a unity on the “universal level” and that which binds men together on the “particular level”. This can perhaps also be understood in relation to the Theosophical “motto”: ‘There is no religion higher than Truth’¹⁴.

With HPB religion in its universal nature as Truth appears to be given an ontological status which is independent of and beyond finite human consciousness, whereas, with Hegel the ontological status of religion is not independent of (collective human) consciousness or absolute spirit, but is an inherent potential form of the absolute spirit manifested and actualised, thus producing a specific reflective experience, within the absolute spirit, of itself. Religion is thus, with Hegel, not beyond consciousness or absolute spirit, but resides within consciousness as a part of consciousness itself; and when actualised it displays a “moment” of the development or the becoming of consciousness. It is the stage, in the development of (absolute) spirit, in which it becomes conscious of itself as absolute spirit. We thus have HPB arguing for religion in its universal sense to be ‘one eternal truth’ residing beyond what she calls finite consciousness¹⁵ and Hegel arguing that religion is a form of consciousness or of absolute spirit.

The problem in this apparent convergence between the two appear to be one of perspective,

11 Schlitt, DS, xiii.

12 Schlitt, DS, xiv.

13 Blavatsky, Isis, Vol. 2, 639.

14 Blavatsky, CW, Vol. IV, 408.

15 Blavatsky, CW, Vol. IX, 33.

because it seems that HPB generally discusses a transcendental nature of religion in relation to a finite consciousness, and Hegel is discussing religion in relation to what he calls absolute spirit.

The absolute spirit of Hegel is, however, obviously not equivalent to what HPB calls finite consciousness. Hegel's term absolute spirit is infinite and is actually the self-consciousness of God¹⁶. To HPB finite consciousness is what she calls the lower quaternary in 'the constitution of man'¹⁷, here especially lower mind (Sk. manas). Lower mind can never grasp the infinite and is limited within time and space. The 'one eternal truth', and thus the essence of true religion, is beyond this aspect of man, residing within the universal mind (Sk. mahat). In this relation, HPB discriminates between relative truth and Absolute Truth which naturally causes a split in her concept of religion. Relative truth is truth as the limited aspect of human consciousness, often called 'the animal part of man', perceives it and is thus often seen in pluralis as truths, since finite human conceptions are as varied as are humans. Relative truth is thus a product of 'finite human consciousness' and is therefore changeable, where Absolute Truth on the other hand is One, immovable,¹⁸ divine, eternal and beyond the world of phenomena, limitation and (Sk.) maya¹⁹. Absolute Truth cannot be grasped by any finite consciousness²⁰, but there is a divine and infinite aspect in man which man can embody if he wills it, through self effort and by transforming and conquering his limited 'animal soul'²¹. This divine part of man can grasp the eternal Truth, because this divine part of man is one with 'UNIVERSAL MIND' in which Truth resides²². This epistemology is highly Platonic in its Plotinian or Neo-platonic form; one easily perceives the demarcation between doxa and episteme, phenomenal and ideal, and the role Nous plays as the perceiver of Truth.

16 Inwood, Hegel Dictionary, 275.

17 Blavatsky, CW, Vol. XII, 691-693.

18 Blavatsky, CW, Vol. IX, 33.

19 Ibid, 33.

20 Ibid, 33.

21 Ibid, 156-157.

22 Ibid, 41.

This discrimination between Absolute and relative truth(s) affects HPB's concept of religion in the way that there is an aspect of religion which is Absolute Truth and an aspect of religion which is relative truth. The aspect of Absolute Truth she calls 'esoteric', 'theosophy', 'wisdom-religion' or the primeval religion and the aspect of relative truth(s) she calls 'exoteric', 'dogmatic', or the many religions, etc. To HPB esoteric religion is thus an ontological entity. It is "sui generis", Universal Truth beyond finite reason and physicality whereas exoteric religion consists of a system of finite conceptions (religious dogmas) produced by finite consciousness in its attempt to grasp and formulate the One Truth.

To Hegel truth in the absolute sense is (also) "One"; it is God from the religious standpoint, the absolute from the philosophical standpoint, absolute knowledge in the *Phenomenology*, the absolute idea in the *Science of Logic*, and absolute spirit in the *Philosophy of Mind*. But, in Hegel's view, the absolute (truth) is not static, it is not the beginning and it is not transcendent and apart from phenomenal existence and finite consciousness, since these are a part of the whole (the absolute) even though they cannot express the absolute in its fullness.

The contradiction thus relate to the fact that the absolute as well as notions in Hegel's system evolve or unfold through a self-positing dialectical process making religion itself evolve as part of the absolute; whereas HPB's Truth, inclusive of religion, seems to be more of a Platonic nature i.e. a static archetype that consciousness slowly seeks to approximate or imitate until it (be-)comes into a complete identity with it. In HPB's view, it is not the Absolute, but finite consciousness that moves through higher and higher forms. Hegel's theory is more of an Aristotelian nature in which form and matter, ideas and phenomena cannot be separated.

There is, however, a paradox within HPB's thought because in certain places it seems as if entities (religion for example) evolve in the same manner as in Hegel's theory. When for example HPB discusses the nature of time in the 'SD' she writes that a real entity or thing

does not consist solely of what is seen at any particular moment, but is composed of the sum

of all its various and changing conditions from its appearance in the material form to its disappearance from earth. It is these “sum totals” that exist from eternity in the “future,” and pass by degrees through matter, to exist for eternity in the “past”²³.

This quote seems very Hegelian, however, from another passage (below) it seems clear that these “sum totals” do not really evolve themselves, but only appear to do so to ‘finite consciousness’.

The first lesson taught in Esoteric Philosophy is, that the incognizable Cause does not put forth evolution, whether consciously or unconsciously, but only exhibits periodically different aspects of itself to the perception of finite Minds²⁴.

From these statements, it seems that HPB views evolution as the fragmented perception or presentation of the real by or to finite minds. Since finite minds are not able to perceive the whole (Truth) at once they perceive bits of it, each successive bit being an evolution in or of finite consciousness. Hegel views this, the process in consciousness, as an important part of the epistemological development of consciousness towards the absolute, whereas from HPB’s perspective the finite perceptions become incomplete and distorted pictures of the Truth and thus not really a significant evolutionary process of truth itself.

In HPB’s system it is thus only consciousness that evolves and not the universals inclusive of religion, whereas with Hegel it is also the universals, truth and religion, that evolve as part of the dialectical interplay of absolute consciousness with itself as object (universals). HPB’s religion thus becomes a non-historical and transcendent religion in its “true” (esoteric) sense whereas Hegel’s religion is historical and immanent.

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²³ Blavatsky, SD, Vol. 1, 37.

²⁴ Blavatsky, SD, Vol. 2, 487.

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ESOTERIC ART



Hegel

[From: Hegelmuseum Stuttgart: Hegel, gemalt nach der Natur und auf Stein gezeichnet von L. Sebbers, 1828]



CONFERENCES

Exploring the Extraordinary

Dates: Friday, September 23rd to Sunday, September 25th, 2011

Location: Holiday Inn Hotel, York, U.K.

Cost: £70 pounds for full conference, including lunch and refreshments (£55 for concessions); £30 per day (£20 for concessions). Concessions apply to students, old age pensioners or the unemployed.

Keynote Speakers: Professor Charles Emmons ("In Praise of Experience as Data")

Dr. Serena Roney-Dougal ("Tibetan Psychic Traditions")

The third Exploring the Extraordinary conference will take place in York this September. Exploring the Extraordinary is an interdisciplinary network for those actively engaged/interested in research into the 'extraordinary' – for example, topics often regarded as paranormal, supernatural, religious, transcendent, ecstatic, exceptional, mystical, anomalous, magical, spiritual.

The conference will include sessions on art, photography and spirit; research reports; and two art exhibitions ('*Nature, twilight and the night*' and '*Dimensions of spirit*') Panels will deal with the following topics:

Boundaries, personal experience and the mystical

Vampires in culture

Space, place and supernatural resonance

The paranormal on both sides of the Atlantic

Parapsychological approaches to paranormal belief and experience

Hospitals, dying and extraordinary experiences

In addition, three documentaries will be screened: *Trance mediumship: A Portrait*; *Personal Electronics*; and *GHost Project*.

For the conference schedule, please visit <http://etenetwork.weebly.com>

Registration forms and further information are available from ete.network@gmail.com.

Contact People: Dr Hannah Gilbert & Dr Madeleine Castro



International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture (ISSRNC)
Religion, Nature and Art

Dates: Thursday, October 13th and Friday, October 14th

Location: Vatican Museum (Vatican City State)

Cost: 160 USD (non-ISSRNC members); 125 USD (members of ISSRNC); 50 USD (students and other scholars demonstrating financial need)

Confirmed Speakers include: Katherine Aigner, Nicola Mapelli, Arnold Nesselrath, Laura Obgood-Oster, Kocku von Stuckrad, and Bron Taylor

This conference, jointly sponsored by the Ethnological Museum of the Vatican Museums, headed by professor Nicola Mapelli, and the International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture, seeks to examine the complex intersections of religion, nature and art. Sessions will focus on broad cultural and geographic areas: “Asian

Religions, Nature and Art”, “Renaissance Art, Religion and Nature”, Indigenous Religions, Nature and Art”, and “Spirituality-based Environmental Activism, Nature and Art”.

The conference will also include two unique opportunities to view art in the Vatican Museums, and of course the opportunity to enjoy Rome and its own ancient treasures and historical legacies.

As part of the conference itself, we will visit the Vatican exhibit “Rituals of Life: the culture and spirituality of aboriginal Australians” with the curator Professor Nicola Mapelli and co-curator Professor Katherine Aigner, and on the concluding night we will tour the Vatican museums (one family member is invited to this tour as well). The two-day conference offers the opportunity, either preceding or following the conference, to collaborate with other scholars in this area or to engage in research (pre-arranged individually) at the Vatican. In addition, each conference registrant will receive a copy of Katherine Aigner’s acclaimed documentary “Australian Atomic Confessions”.

Contact People: Fr. Mapelli at diretn.musei@scv.va
Katherine Aigner at katherine.aigner@anu.edu.au



American Academy of Religion

Dates: Saturday, November 19th to Tuesday, November 22nd

Location: San Francisco, California, USA

Phoenix Rising Academy is convening an Additional Meeting at this year's AAR Annual Meeting in San Francisco, California, to explore the transdisciplinary options that may lead to more balanced and integrative approaches in the study of Western Esotericism.

Date of Additional Meeting: Saturday, November 19th

Time: 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Location: Continental Parlor Room 2, Hilton Union Square, San Francisco

Many scholars of Western Esotericism support that its validation as a field within mainstream academia lies in the application of empiricism as the primary research method. Yet this perspective disregards a defining constituent of the object of study, namely, the symbolic perception which might also be termed imaginal epistemology. Pejoratively termed ‘religionism’, carrying connotations of inadequate scholarship, this

formative element of esoteric thought has become the new pariah of the academic study of the field broadly termed Western Esotericism in its current form.

The concept of symbolic perception and interpretation is rooted in Western intellectual history, and its significance has been highlighted by a number of respected scholars who have proposed integrative models and approaches that combine scholarly rigour with imaginative and sympathetic engagement. Other scholars have called for channels of dialogue and mutual understanding to be developed between scholars and practitioners in order to better understand the application and potentials of such epistemologies. However, scholars calling for more interdisciplinary approaches have often found themselves marginalized, meeting with varying degrees of censure among their peers.

This approach is taking the field in a reductionist direction, with disquieting implications. More alarming still is the near-demonisation of such areas of inquiry in influential scholarly circles.

Such interdictions have no place in centers of intellectual inquiry, and to support them with claims of 'academic legitimacy' is to perpetuate the very reductionist and rationalist thinking that led to the separation of the sciences from the humanities and consigned the study of esoteric and initiatory philosophy to the backwaters of cultural and intellectual inquiry for the last three hundred years.

Even the most etic of approaches is not immune to subjectivity, and this begs the question of its adequacy for a subject whose very texts and images are directed towards inner, transformative work. Integrated approaches have been long established in many other areas of the humanities and social sciences, from art and performance, to ethnographic and behavioral perspectives. Thus the proscription of all but the most critical and rational methodologies necessarily fails to do justice to such a topic of study.

Phoenix Rising Academy wishes to explore the transdisciplinary options that may lead to more balanced and integrative approaches, while drawing attention to the very real dangers that we perceive in the insistence on objective and disinterested empiricism as the sole acceptable method for the study of these topics.

Contact Person: Sasha Chaitow phoenix@phoenixrising.org.gr



● **Demons and Devils in Early Modern Europe**

Date: Friday, December 2nd, 2011

Location: Warburg Institute, University of London, School of Advanced Study,
Woburn Square, London WC1H 0AB, U.K.

In the course of his illustrious career at the Warburg Institute, D.P. Walker (1914-1985) published seminal works that contributed to redefining our view of early modern magic and demonology, such as *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella* (1958), *Decline of Hell* (1964) and *Unclean Spirits: Possession and Exorcism in France and England in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries* (1981). This conference intends to celebrate his legacy by presenting the most recent results by young researchers working at the Warburg Institute.

Speakers will include Anna Corrias, Sietske Fransen, Michael Gordian, Nicholas Holland, James A. T. Lancaster, and Anthony Ossa-Richardson.

Contact Person: Guido Giglioni Guido.Giglioni@sas.ac.uk



● **Russian Association for the Study of Esotericism and Mysticism (ASEM), Fifth International Conference: Mystic and Esoteric Movements in Theory and Practice**

Dates: Friday, December 2nd to Monday, December 5th, 2011

Location: 15 Fontanka Naberezhnaya, St. Petersburg, Russia

Theme: History and Discourse: Historical and Philosophical Aspects of the Study of Esotericism and Mysticism.

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Wouter J. Hanegraaff (University of Amsterdam)

Conference Languages: Russian & English

Cost: 40 Euro (for participants who are not from countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States); The fee for non-CIS citizens who plan to arrive in Russia by opening a tourist visa is 30 Euro. The fee is to be paid upon registration.

This conference is hosted by the Association for the Study of Esotericism and Mysticism in collaboration with the Russian Christian Academy for Humanities (Saint-Petersburg), H. S. Skovoroda Institute of Philosophy (National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine), the Ukrainian Association of Religion Researchers, and the Research Center for Mysticism and Esotericism (St. Petersburg, Russia).

The historical approach plays a highly important role in the study of mystical and esoteric movements as all other approaches are to an extent reliant on it. The extraordinary importance of historical analyses requires, however, special attention. It is well-known that over the course of the history of western culture mystical and esoteric phenomena have been to a great extent excluded from the cultural mainstream and have often been oppressed by dominant 'exoteric' discourses. This is because historians of esotericism and mysticism are often confronted with the discursive nature of historical witnesses and descriptions and are called for "not confusing our constructs with historical reality" (W. J. Hanegraaff). Could a supposedly realistic description of some esoteric phenomenon merely be a result of polemical discourse? Do clichés or even pure inventions appear in place of expected historical analysis? How do discursive formations influence the way mystical and esoteric aspects of religious culture have been perceived and represented during a particular period of time in history? How can a historian 'separate the wheat from the chaff' in (self)descriptions of mystical and esoteric phenomena? These and other related issues still call for more awareness and conceptualization within historical and philosophical research of deviant religious and cultural phenomena.

The conference organizers hope that this conference will contribute significantly to the awareness of the problem. The critical historical research of esotericism and mysticism may lay the ground for further developments in the field of study in Russia and other post-Soviet countries.

Call for Papers: Deadline October 25th, 2011

We invite suggestions paper proposals dealing with the study of this phenomenon through various academic disciplines. Papers can be submitted on, but are not limited to, the following sub-themes:

- general methodological issues in the study of esotericism and mysticism;
- peculiarity of the historical approach to the study of esotericism and mysticism;
- the problem of a historical reconstruction of esoteric movements;
- esoteric scholars as an object of the study of esotericism;
- constructing of the 'own' history in esoteric circles;
- current developments of mystical and esoteric movements;
- mystical experience and its 'historical' representations by mystics;
- influence of discursive formations on the study in esotericism.

Application Form

Applications for the conference are to be sent to the address of the organizing committee esot.conference2011@gmail.com by 25 October 2011.

We kindly request to fill in the forms in the following manner:

- Full name:
- Date of birth
- Academic degree
- Home address
- Place of work
- Current position
- Contact phone
- E-Mail
- Need of an official invitation to receive a private (humanitarian) visa for the entry into Russian Federation (yes/no)
- Need of technical equipment for your report presentation (yes (please, specify which equipment you need)/no)
- Paper title
- Short paper abstract (approx. 200 words)
- The language of the paper presentation

Call for Panel and Round Table Proposals: Deadline October 25th, 2011

These applications need to be filled in the same way as the general applications (entries 1-13). Additionally, an organizer should specify the estimated number of participants and provide a preliminary program.

Sending an application and text does not mean an automatic inclusion into the conference program. The decision on the applications will be communicated within a week after the deadline via e-mail.

Style sheet

The organizing committee plans to publish selected papers in the conference proceedings (minimum editing in cooperation with authors will take place where required). The papers of authors who do not present their papers during the conference cannot be published.

The size of the full paper text including footnotes and bibliography should be between 15.000 and 20.000 characters including spaces (calculated e.g. by the MS Word feature).

The text is to be sent to the organizing committee in electronic form (accepted formats are *.doc or *.rtf), and is to be formatted after the model text. The model text can also be sent per e-mail upon request.

Organizing Committee

Chair: Dr. Sergey Pakhomov (Saint-Petersburg, Russia), Prof. Dr. Roman Svetlov (Saint-Petersburg).

Members: Prof. Dr. Andrey Zabayako (Blagoveshchensk, Russia); Prof. Dr. Ludmila Filipovich (Kyiv, Ukraine), Prof. Dr. Julia Shabanova (Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine); Prof. Dr. Dmitri Shmonin (Saint-Petersburg); Prof. Dr. Birgit Menzel (Mainz, Germany); Dr. Vadim

Zhdanov (Erlangen, Germany); Dr. Vitaly Vovchenko (Orel, Russia); Dr. Yuriy Zavorodniy (Kyiv, Ukraine); Dr. Sergey Kapranov (Kyiv, Ukraine).

For additional information about the conference, please send an e-mail to the conference organizers (esot.conference2011@gmail.com).

The latest information about the conference will be published at the homepage of the [Association for the study of Esotericism and Mysticism \(ASEM\)](#)



● **Second Annual INASWE Conference**

● **Date:** Thursday, March 22nd, 2012

● **Location:** University of Haifa, Mount Carmel, Haifa 31905, Israel

● **Guest Speakers:** Per Faxfeld (Stockholm University), Peter Forshaw (University of Amsterdam)

● Following its inauguration in June, 2011, the Israeli Network for the Academic Study of Western Esotericism looks forward to hosting a conference in Haifa in March, 2012. Further details will be forthcoming.

● **Contact Person:** Boaz Huss



● **Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association
Conference: Tarot Area**

Dates: Wednesday, April 11th to Sunday, April 14th, 2012

Location: Boston, MA, USA

Call for Papers: Deadline December 15th, 2011

Possible topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Tarot and art history
- Tarot and literature
- Tarot artists, writers, and readers
- Individual decks and their guidebooks
- Tarot as a motif in comics, literature, and film
- Playing cards in art history

In addition, see Emily E. Auger's website for special co-area calls for papers on the work of John Fowles (Visual and Verbal Culture/Tarot) and "Dealing Tarot for Health and Fate" (Medical Humanities/Tarot), and other presentations. Participants should be prepared to present their work as scholarly research and/ or for the benefit of an interested audience of academics.

See the PCA/ACA conference website for more information about registration and resources.

Contact Person: Emily E. Auger, Tarot Area Chair, PCA/ACA conference

Email: augeremily@gmail.com



Science and the Occult - from Antiquity to Early Modern Period

Dates: Friday, April 20th to Saturday, April 21st, 2012

Location: Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana, USA

Keynote speakers: Edward Bever Ph.D., Chair of History & Philosophy

Department, SUNY-Old Westbury (State University of New York);

Nancy L. Turner Ph.D., Chair of Social Sciences and History

Department, University of Wisconsin-Platteville; Chair of Societas

Alchimica

The fascinating recurrence of alchemical symbols in European, American, and Islamic thought, as well as specific non-rational methods employed by many scientists to promote rational discoveries from Ancient times through the Early Modern Period, will be the focus of this conference.

Call for Papers: Deadline October 1st, 2011

Topics considered (but not limited to):

- History of Magic
- Alchemy
- Witchcraft
- Medicine
- Herbalism
- Kabala
- Numerology
- Sacred Geometry
- Esoterism
- Hermetism and Hermeticism
- Divination

- Tarot
- Astrology
- Tradition and Lore
- Ciphers and Alphabets
- Semiotics and Symbolology.

Full CV and 500-word abstract to be submitted as a Word attachment.

We anticipate the publication of an edited Volume II, after the event.

Note: We mainly accept faculty submissions. However, Independent Scholars and graduate students will be considered too.

Offers to Preside for General Sessions: Deadline January 15th, 2012

A one-page resume should accompany the offer to preside.

Hosted by the Department of History and supported by the Bilsland-Puskas Initiative endowment at Purdue University

Contact Person: Angela Catalina Ghionea ghionea@purdue.edu

For more information, see : <http://www.cla.purdue.edu/history/scienceandtheoccult>



Knowledge to die for: Transmission of Prohibited and Esoteric Knowledge through Space and Time

Dates: Wednesday, May 2nd to Friday, May 4th, 2012

Location: Max-Planck-Institute for the History of Science (Max-Planck-Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte, Boltzmannstraße 22. 14195 Berlin

This conference deals with prohibited, heretical and esoteric knowledge, as attested in Mesopotamia and in ancient Jewish, Rabbinic, and Apocalyptic literature, as well as in Christian and Islamic contexts, pre-Islamic and later Iranian sources, and incorporating Judeo-Christian-Muslim heterodoxies.

Speakers will include: Michael Stone (Jerusalem), Boris Uspenskij (Naples), Gebhard Selz (Vienna), Tal Ilan (Berlin), Alexander Kulik (Jerusalem), James Russell (Harvard), Dimitri Gutas (Yale), Hans Kippenberg (Bremen), Angelika Neuwirth (Berlin), Antonio Panaino (Bologna), Maria Macuch (Berlin), Velizar Sadovski (Vienna), Jens Braarvig (Oslo), Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst (Berlin), Yuri Stoyanov

(London), David Shankland (London), Matteo Martelli (Berlin).

Conference organiser: Prof. Dr. Florentina Badalanova Geller

[<fgeller@zedat.fu-berlin.de>](mailto:fgeller@zedat.fu-berlin.de); Phone: +49.30.838.51606

Contact Person: Kirsten Koners [<kirsten.koners@topoi.org>](mailto:kirsten.koners@topoi.org);

Phone:+49.30.838.57687



● **The Materiality of Magic**

Dates: Wednesday, May 23rd to Friday, May 25th, 2012

Location: Cologne, Germany

The Internationales Kolleg Morphomata of the Universität zu Köln will be hosting a symposium on 'The Materiality of Magic'. Ancient magic has been a focus of great interest since the early 1990s. Although much has been written on the concept of magic itself, its origins, its various genres, formulas, etc., there has thus far been little attention paid to the fact that magical knowledge became enshrined in certain types of material, such as lead, stone, gems and papyrus - material that sometimes was used for specific kinds of magic. It is the aim of this conference to take the material as the point of departure for a discussion of various types of magic. The centre of the discussion is antiquity, but we have also included discussions of preceding and subsequent eras in order to supplement, compare, and contrast the classical material.

Speakers:

Prof. Dr. Richard Gordon (Erfurt): *Magic: where do we stand now*

Dr. Andrea Zeeb-Lanz (Rheinland-Pfalz, Direktion Landes-archäologie, Außenstelle Speyer): *Magic in Prehistory*

Dr. Laura Feldt (Copenhagen): *Magic in Mesopotamia*

Dr. Jacco Dieleman (UCLA): *Magic in Roman Egypt*

Prof. dr. Chris Faraone (Chicago): *Voodoo Dolls in Antiquity*

Prof. dr. Veronique Dasen (Fribourg): *Magical Gems in Antiquity*

Prof. dr. Jan N. Bremmer (Munich/Groningen): *Magic Books*

Dr. Jaime Curbera (Berlin): *Defixiones*

Dr. Drew Milburn (Oberlin College): *Magic in Architecture*

Prof. dr. Shaul Shaked (Jerusalem): *Incantation Bowls in Late Antiquity*

Prof. dr. Andrew Reynolds (UC London): *Magic in Anglo-Saxon England*

Dr. Tanja Klemm (Morpomata/Basel): *The Magic of Corals in the Renaissance*

Dr. Peter Forshaw (Amsterdam): *Magical Armour in Early Modern Europe*

Prof. dr. Owen Davies (Hertfordshire): *The Materiality of Magic Today*



● **Association for the Study of Esotericism (ASE) Fourth Annual Conference: Esotericism, Religion, and Culture**

Dates: Thursday, June 14th to Sunday, June 17th, 2012

Location: University of California, Davis, USA

Cost: 235 USD; 135 USD for graduate students

Call for Papers and Panel Proposals: Deadline December 30th, 2011

The Association for the Study of Esotericism (ASE) is seeking paper and panel proposals for its fourth International North American Conference on Esotericism to be held at the University of California, Davis.

We are seeking proposals on topics in Western Esotericism, particularly related to themes exploring the relationships between esotericism, religion, and culture. Papers may focus on any one of these topics, or on a specific conjunction of topics, especially as it relates to esotericism, and we encourage papers that feature intellectual history or history of ideas. We invite proposals on magic, alchemy, astrology, ritual practice, mysticism, spiritualism, occultism, hermeticism, neo-paganism, contemporary esoteric movements and teachers, Asian influences on Western traditions, and other related topics. In addition to the broad theme of culture – which includes literature, art, philosophy, and drama, as well as religion – we would like to feature a methodological discussion (Esotericism Across the Disciplines). We also are interested in panels specifically on mysticism. ASE regards esotericism as an interdisciplinary field of research and we invite scholars from all disciplines to share their research and writings in support of a cross-fertilization of perspectives. We welcome scholars from a wide range of areas, including anthropology, American studies, art history, history, intellectual history, religious studies, literature, philosophy, psychology, medieval studies, sociology – the full range of academic disciplines and fields.. In order to encourage graduate study in the field, we will offer a modest prize for the best graduate student paper presented.

Submission Address:

If you wish to submit a paper proposal or a thematically focused panel proposal (with three presenters and short descriptions included) for review and possible presentation at the conference, please send it by regular email to

ASE2012Conference@gmail.com

No attachments, please: simply copy and paste your abstract into plain text email. Individual abstracts should be limited to one or two paragraphs, and must indicate academic affiliation and/or other academic qualifications. Independent scholars are welcome to submit proposals. Please note that our previous conference was at maximum capacity, so it is best to submit your proposal sooner rather than later. We hope to post a preliminary list of accepted proposals early in 2012. Possible venues for the publication of

conference papers include the book series Studies in Esotericism (this will be the fourth volume in the series).

For more information on the ASE, see the website at www.aseweb.org
An additional announcement will be forthcoming on the 2012 ASE conference, with information on location, hotels, and conference registration for speakers and ASE members.



- **Astrology in Time and Place: Cross-Cultural Questions in the History of Astrology**
- **Dates: Saturday, June 23rd and Sunday, June 24th, 2012**
- **Location: Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution, Bath, England**
- **Keynote Speakers:**
- Professor David Pankenier, whose books include *East Asian Archaeoastronomy: Historical Records of Astronomical Observations of China, Japan, and Korea* (with Xu, Zhenhao and Yaotiao Jiang, Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 2000) and *Bringing Heaven Down to Earth: Celestial Foundations of Chinese Civilisation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Professor Francesca Rochberg, one of the foremost authorities on Mesopotamian astrology and its transmission to the Hellenistic world, and author of *The Heavenly Writing: Divination, Horoscopy and Astronomy in Mesopotamian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) and *In the Path of the Moon: Babylonian Celestial Divination and its Legacy* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

Professor Michael York, former Professor of Cultural Astronomy and Astrology at Bath Spa University, and author of *The Emerging Network: A Sociology of the New Age and Neo-Pagan Movements* (London: Rowan and Littlefield, 1995) and *Pagan Theology: Paganism as a World Religion* (New York: New York University Press, 2003).

Organized by The Sophia Centre and the School of Archaeology, History and Anthropology, University of Wales Trinity Saint David

Call for Papers: Deadline December 1st, 2011

We invite abstracts for this academic conference which will consider the questions which arise from the transmission of ideas in the theory and practice of astrology. Such transmission may be between cultures, or through time in the same culture. Issues may also be addressed of comparison between cultures.

Astrology has been practiced in some form in most cultures. In some it is rudimentary, in others complex. It may be considered magical, religious or scientific, or it may defy categorization. There is evidence of the transmission of ideas in the near east between

Egypt, Greece and Mesopotamia, and between the Near East, India and East Asia. In Mesoamerica and China technical forms arose which were entirely different to the Near Eastern tradition. Syncretism has been a major feature of astrology in India, Persia and Europe down to modern New Age culture and the globalisation of alternative spiritualities.

This conference will consider questions surrounding the exchange of astrological ideas or practice between cultures, issues arising from their transmission from one period to another, or consider comparisons between the astrologies of different cultures. Papers may focus on iconography, literature, theory, practice, philosophy or cultural context.

Proposals are invited for papers of 30 minutes, to include discussion. All papers will be plenary sessions.

Abstracts should be around 150 words.

Speakers will not have to register for the conference.

Please submit abstracts and full contact information to Dr Nicholas

Campion n.campion@tsd.ac.uk

Conference Chairs: Nicholas Campion and Dorian Greenbaum

Contact Person: Nicholas Campion, n.campion@tsd.ac.uk



● **Capturing Witches: Histories, Stories, Images 400 years after the Lancashire Witches**

Dates: Friday, August 17th to Sunday, August 19th, 2012

Location: Lancaster University, Lancaster, U.K.

Confirmed Keynote Speakers: Diane Purkiss (Oxford); Robert Poole (Cumbria)

Call for Papers: Deadline December 1st, 2011

In 2012, a year-long programme of events in Lancaster and the surrounding area will mark the 400th anniversary of the trial and execution of the first group of Lancashire Witches. A second trial occurred in 1634 and although pardoned, the accused were re-imprisoned in Lancaster Castle. The case of the Lancashire Witches and their supposed crimes interwove fact and fiction, local hostilities and more exotic ideas of witches' sabbats that were usually associated with continental witchcraft. They became a cause célèbre, like the witches of Trier and Fulda (Germany), Torsåker (Sweden) and Salem (North America).

This interdisciplinary conference uses the Lancashire witches as a focal point to engage with wider questions about witchcraft: its definitions as maleficium (evil doing) or demonology in trials, the various traditions of witchcraft across centuries and continents, and the ways in which contemporary practice engages with these.

Capturing Witches: Histories, Stories, Images will focus particular attention on how witchcraft is theorised and represented in and through history and across cultures. We particularly encourage considerations of literary, musical, artistic and filmic representations of witchcraft.

We invite proposals for 20-minute papers and panels on witches and/or witchcraft which might address - but are not limited to - the following themes:

- * antiquity;
- * religion and belief;
- * Neo-Paganism;
- * the developing world;
- * human rights;
- * gender;
- * corporeality;
- * location;
- * ritual (ceremony, performance, magical practice);
- * childhood;
- * language;
- * law;
- * consumption (dress, fashion, food);
- * the arts (literature, music, film, painting, dance, theatre, graphic novels);
- * the Gothic;
- * new media

Proposals for contributions which go beyond the conventional academic format are also welcome.

Proposals for papers should be 250 words; for panels or other formats 500 words, including a 50-word bio for each contributor.

Submission address: capturingwitches@lancaster.ac.uk

Decisions on submissions will be made by 31 January 2012.

Conference team: Charlotte Baker, Alison Findlay, Liz Oakley-Brown, Elena Semino, Catherine Spooone



Contemporary Esotericism

Dates: Monday, August 27th to Wednesday, August 29th, 2012

Location: Department of History of Religions, Stockholm University, Sweden.

Keynote speakers:

Wouter J. Hanegraaff (Center for History of Hermetic Philosophy and Related Currents, University of Amsterdam)

Christopher Partridge (Religious Studies, Lancaster University)

Kocku von Stuckrad (Study of Religion, Groningen University)

Call for Papers: Deadline March 30th, 2012

The academic study of Western esotericism has blossomed in recent years; University departments and MA programs have been established, book series and journals launched, academic societies founded, and several international conferences and panels are organized every year.

There is, however, still a major gap in scholarship on esotericism:

very little research exists on contemporary phenomena. While some present-day phenomena related to esotericism, such as 'New Age spiritualities' and (neo)paganism, have been the focus of scholars in other fields, scholars working in the field of esotericism have largely neglected such developments. With a focus on early modern phenomena, scholarship in the field of Western esotericism has been predominantly historiographical in its approach, with a common reluctance to incorporate social scientific approaches. In recent years, however, serious attempts have been made to develop sociological approaches to the study of the esoteric/occult which are both compatible with historical approaches and forgo the biased presumptions of yesteryear. A fundamental challenge for the study of contemporary esoteric phenomena is that it is not sufficient to simply transpose theories, definitions and methodologies developed for the study of e.g. Renaissance magic to later manifestations of the esoteric. Studying contemporary phenomena poses intriguing possibilities, such as the opportunity to study esotericism in lived contexts, which unavoidably also introduce new problems. In general, several theoretical and methodological concerns need to be addressed if a proper study of contemporary esotericism is to succeed.

Suggested Topics

The primary aim of this conference is to place contemporary phenomena on the agenda of the study of esotericism. Thus we welcome papers dealing with contemporary and recent developments in "classic"

esoteric currents – e.g. within Theosophy, Anthroposophy, Freemasonry, Rosicrucianism, and ritual magical currents – as well as esoteric developments of particular relevance today – e.g. Chaos Magick, Satanism, and (neo)paganism. We also strongly encourage papers dealing with theoretical and methodological issues that are particularly pertinent to the study of contemporary esotericism, as well as papers dealing with the societal, cultural, political, religious etc.

contexts of esotericism today. This can include discussions on the role played by the esoteric in modern politics (e.g. the new right), grassroots activism (e.g. deep ecology and the animal rights movement), science (e.g. parapsychology, neurotheology, "New Age physics"), healthcare (e.g. alternative medicine), popular culture (both entertainment media and in broader contexts such as kitsch, consumer, and fan culture), and modern interactive communications media (e.g. mediatization and the effects of changing modes

of mediation), as well as the simultaneous influence of these and other fields on esoteric notions, beliefs, and practices. General theoretical discussion on the potential usefulness of sociological terms and concepts such as globalization, secularization, and the post-secular in the study of contemporary esotericism is also encouraged. The conference should function as an interdisciplinary meeting place where scholars from a multitude of disciplines and with different approaches and perspectives can come together to learn from each other.

Interested parties may send in their abstracts (approx. 200 words) along with a brief academic CV (max. 1 page) already at this early stage.

Submission Address: ContEso2012@gmail.com.

Conference organizers:

**Egil Asprem (Center for History of Hermetic Philosophy and Related Currents,
University of Amsterdam)**

Kennet Granholm (History of Religions, Stockholm University)

Additional information

The conference will function as the launching party for Contemporary Esotericism (Equinox Publishing, <http://www.equinoxpub.com/equinox/books/showbook.asp?bkid=531>), the first volume specifically dedicated to the study of esotericism in the present day. In addition, the conference is arranged in conjunction with the 2012 EASR conference, also arranged in Stockholm, Sweden (at Södertörn University, August 23-26). Panels on esotericism, both historical and contemporary, are planned for the EASR as well, thus providing the opportunity to engage in extended discussion on these subjects, and of course lessening travel expenses. A more detailed call for papers, including information on registration, conference fees, transportation, accommodation etc., will be sent out later.



The Edges of Freemasonry – Western Esotericism and the Enlightenment

Dates: Friday, September 7th and Saturday, September 8th, 2012

Location: University of Tampere, Tampere, Finland

Keynote Speakers: Professor Ronald Hutton (University of Bristol, U.K.)

Dr. Róbert Péter (University of Szeged, Hungary)

Dr. Henrik Bogdan (University of Gothenburg, Sweden)

Mr. Antti Talvitie, Architect MSc. (Seinäjoki, Finland)

Conference Language: English

Call for Papers: Deadline for proposals for general sessions November 30th, 2011

The School of Social Sciences and Humanities at the University of Tampere is organizing an international conference on Freemasonry, Western Esotericism and the development of the Enlightenment ideas. The conference is organized in association with the Research Lodge Minerva No. 27 of The Grand Lodge of F. & A. M. of Finland. The themes focus on historical developments, although other aspects will also be presented.

The conference is a two-day event open to scholars, postgraduate students and students, likewise to the members of Masonic lodges and the public.

Freemasonry is among the most widespread spiritual communities and has had a significant role in diverse ideological currents often named western esotericism. Freemasonry, which is at least 300 years old, is firmly rooted in the tradition of the Enlightenment.

Western esotericism and freemasonry have increasingly attracted attention from academic research. As a unique yet also controversial phenomenon, freemasonry provides a dynamic standpoint for the study of western cultural and intellectual life which from this point of view has been much neglected.

The key themes are (1) the historical constitution of freemasonry; (2) the connections between western esotericism and the development of modern science; (3) symbols as cultural artefacts and transmission objects between the personal and the transcendence; and (4) extending the rational: rites, intuition and religious experience in western subjectivity.

The conference board welcomes all scholarly presentations, also from postgraduates, related to the themes or concepts of the Enlightenment, freemasonry, esotericism or the occult.

Submission Addresses: Titles of presentations, contact information, and abstracts of 400 – 600 words should be sent via e-mail to the conference secretaries, Mr. Antti Harmainen at papers@edges.fi and Ms. Katariina Lehto at papers@symposium.fi

For registration and conference details please see www.edges.fi

For more information contact the conference secretaries, Professor Risto Harisalo at risto.harisalo@uta.fi or Dr. Marko Nenonen at marko.nenonen@uta.fi, +358 40 577 9737.



● Alchemy and Medicine from Antiquity to the Enlightenment

Dates: Thursday, September 22nd to Friday, September 24th, 2011

Location: Peterhouse College, University of Cambridge

Keynote lecture: Bruce T. Moran (University of Nevada at Reno)

Speakers include:

Chiara Crisciani (Università degli Studi di Pavia)

Andrew Cunningham (University of Cambridge)

Hiro Hirai (Radboud University Nijmegen)

Didier Kahn (CNRS, Paris)

William Newman (Indiana University)

Michela Pereira (Università di Siena)

Lawrence Principe (Johns Hopkins University)

Nancy Siraisi (City University of New York)

Emma Spary (University of Cambridge)

Cost: 60 (full fee; includes lunches, coffee/tea); 30 (student fee; includes lunches, coffee/tea). Registration for dinner is no longer possible.

N.B.: Registration via internet is now closed, but registration in person is still possible at the registration desk on Thursday, September 22nd from 1 – 4:30 p.m. Payment by cash or cheque only. If planning to attend, please e-mail Jenny Rampling at jmr82@hermes.cam.ac.uk

Alchemists pursued many goals, from the transmutation of metals to the preservation of health and life. These pursuits were continually informed and modified by medical knowledge, while alchemical debates about nature, generation, and the achievability of perfection in turn impacted on medicine and natural philosophy. This three-day international conference will investigate these interactions, from alchemy's development in late antiquity to its decline throughout the eighteenth century. It will ask how alchemical and medical ideas and practices changed over time, how they reflected the experience of individual readers and practitioners, and the extent to which they responded to significant currents in intellectual, political, and social life.

Panel themes include: Elixirs and the prolongation of life; Medicine, alchemy and patronage; The eighteenth-century transmutation of chemical medicine; Books, recipes and secrets; Medical practitioners as alchemists; Shared materials, practices and technologies; The transmission of alchemical and medical knowledge; Histories of alchemy and medicine.

Organised by Jennifer Rampling, Peter M. Jones and Lauren Kassell (Department of History and Philosophy of Science, Cambridge), and supported by the Centre for Research in the Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences (CRASSH).



CONFERENCE REPORT

ESSWE3 at Szeged, Hungary, July 6th to 10th, 2011

Lux in Tenebris: The Visual and Symbolic in Western Esotericism

ESSWE's third biennial conference in Szeged, Hungary was a great success. Well-attended by a vibrant mixture of professors and graduate students at various points in their courses of study, ESSWE conferences are an ideal venue for keeping up with the latest developments in various research topics and for forging new connections and friendships. An added bonus is the chance to explore rich, new cultural settings – in this case the lovely city of Szeged in southern Hungary.

Gyorgy Szonyi and his team are to be commended for putting together a well-organized conference, which provided the participants not only with an engaging selection of panels and plenary speakers, but many opportunities to sample traditional Hungarian cuisine and the cultural highlights of Szeged. Especially appreciated was the program booklet, which included the e-mail contact information of the presenters, as well as detailed information on the conference sessions. If that was not enough, conference participants also had the opportunity to tour the historic labyrinth of Buda Castle (now, sadly, closed to the public), a delicious lunch, a tour of the history museum, and the captivating scenery from the castle hill in Budapest

Panels and Plenaries

After a welcoming reception, the conference officially opened on Wednesday evening with an address by both the rector of Szeged University, Gabor Szabo, and the president of ESSWE, Wouter Hanegraaff. These were followed by an inspiring discourse on Ficino and his metaphysics and psychology of light, given by Michael J.B. Allen. In a fitting synchronicity, Michael ended his talk on light as the sun slowly sank beneath the horizon. As always, the offerings of these conferences are so rich that one longs to be in two places at the same time, and one must sadly eliminate the possibility of attending each and every paper of interest.

The first panel I attended on Thursday was on alchemy. Peter Forshaw highlighted some of the many examples of light and fire in the work of Heinrich Khunrath and the connections Khunrath made between Christ and the philosopher's stone. Jo Hedesan examined the *Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz* and the *Mutus Liber*, pointing out various correspondences between verbal and visual symbols in these two works and their equivalents in both alchemical equipment and procedures. For example, she likened the two paths Rosenkreutz encounters on the way to the wedding as analogous to the use of either distillation or the crucible. Mike Zuber looked at Johann Joachim Becher's *Mineralogia* (1662) and demonstrated traces of alchemy throughout the work. He noted that Becher's portrayal of Jupiter as a farmer, watering all the metals to make them grow, is probably intended to underscore the role that lead plays in the alchemical process.

Next on the agenda was the first plenary speaker, Lina Bolzoni, who spoke on the *Idea del Teatro* of Giulio Camillo. According to Lina, Camillo tried to find keys to unite all traditions and philosophies, but was more interested in practical results than in abstractions. He concluded that eloquence and alchemy both ‘purify’ to attain a similar final result. She also presented an intriguing painting by Titian, entitled *An Allegory of Prudence* (1565–70).

The plenary was followed by a panel on “Hidden and Revealed Symbols.” Leading of the session was Clare Fanger with her exposition of the use of figures and letter meditations in the *Liber florum* (early 14th century) of John of Morigny. John’s contemporaries criticized the book for being too ‘necromantic’, but for John the prayers and the images contained in his work were consistent with orthodoxy. John specified that some of his strings of letters are not meant to be understood rationally but are primarily intended to function as foci of mental visualization. Clare was followed by Marc Michael Epstein, whose presentation on the Golden Haggadah was both entertaining and informative. Marc pointed out that the Haggadah may have been one of only two books in a household and therefore had to serve many purposes. His method of interpreting the relationships between the beautiful panels illustrating various narratives from Jewish scripture opens the viewer’s eyes to a meaning beyond mere storytelling. Last up in the panel was Joshua Gentzke, who tackled the daunting task of “Imagining the Image of God in the Work of Jacob Boehme”. One of the images Joshua explicated was Boehme’s concept of the mirror as an expression of *magia* and the *Ungrund*.

The panel on Renaissance Kabbalah was composed of three scholars, all of whom gave very clear presentations, which – as someone with limited knowledge of the subject – I very much appreciated. The first to present, Yoed Kadary focused on the innovations of early Renaissance Kabbalists regarding angels, especially in the thought of Isaac Luria. Yoed detailed one distinctive feature of Lurianic Kabbalah: man is considered capable of creating angels, although these angels cannot be trusted as they are prone to lying. The next participant, Assaf Tamari, addressed another Lurianic concept: tripartite man. Two ideas were striking for me in Assaf’s presentation. One was the parallel between the concept of all the “soul sparks” occurring within the body of the first Adam and gnostic concept of the soul sparks. The other was the incompatibility of the concept of a “unique self” with Lurianic Kabbalah. Rounding out the panel was Yuval Harari, who spoke about the *Tree of Knowledge* (*Etz Ha-da’at*), essentially a book of magical recipes categorized as “practical Kabbalah” from 16th century Safed and which is unusual for the “moral instructions” which accompany these recipes. Yuval listed eight rhetorical features of magical texts.

For the final panel of the day, I chose to attend the one on Renaissance and Baroque magic. First off was Noel Putnik, who examined Agrippa’s “cosmic ladder” of the archetypal world, the celestial world, and the elementary world. Noel was followed by Joyce Pijnenburg. Joyce looked at the roles of *nox* and *lumen* and their relation to chaos or vacuum and God, as presented in Giordano Bruno’s *Lampas Triginta Statuarum* (1587–1591). I found Joyce’s comparison of Bruno and Lull’s conception of chaos to be especially helpful in clarifying the two men’s points of view. Paul Shore rounded out the program with his look at the *Zodiacus Christianus* of the Jesuit Jeremias Drexel. Drexel’s *Zodiacus* notably uses plants, rather than the traditional zodiac signs and replaces the seven planets with the seven Christian virtues. Shore considers the *Zodiacus* an example of the Jesuits

attempts to find “equivalencies” between their message and the beliefs of the societies they wished to convert. Head crammed with ideas, I headed off with my family to enjoy the complimentary wine and Hungarian delicacies at the Szeged Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

Friday started off with a short panel, only two presenters in the session on Rosicrucian literature. Sebastien Gregov started the panel by using the *Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz* as an example of how secrets are simultaneously kept and conveyed. Sebastien also compared the features of Mannerism and alchemy. Thomas Willard’s presentation continued the *Chymical Wedding* theme, focusing on the various illustrations and symbols contained in that work. Thomas considers the wedding a “circular story”, analogous to the alchemical process.

The plenary session featured one of the giants in the field of esotericism Moshe Idel. It was the first time I had heard him speak and found him to be an engaging and insightful speaker. Moshe traced the development of the Shield of David from its use in Kabbalah to Western Esotericism, cautioning that just because something is a hexagram, it is not necessarily a Shield of David.

The final session of my day was “Stars, Symbols and Characters”. Konstantin Burmistrov started with a look at “Pictorial Representations of the Structure of Creation (Ilanot) in Jewish and Christian Kabbalah”. One interesting bit of information in Konstantin’s talk was Fludd’s appropriation and inversion of the sephirothic tree appearing in the corner of the *Porta Lucis* in one of his own books. Eniko Bekes informed us that physiognomy was used as both a divinatory tool and a means of medical diagnosis. Theodor Harmsen finished the session with his presentation on the “Symbols of Valentin Weigel and Pseudo-weigelian Artistry”. The eye was an important symbol for Weigel, and he distinguished between the “internal” eye and the “external” eye. Theodor also noted that Boehme had studied Weigel.

Afterwards we had an opportunity to view the esoteric book collection of the Somogyi Library, as well as a reconstituted room of the original library, with the knowledgeable librarian and Gyorgy as her able translator. In the evening, most of the conference participants took advantage of a charter bus trip out to the countryside for a buffet dinner featuring, among other Hungarian specialties, the traditional fish soup of the area and plenty of wine!

The panel I spoke in took place first thing Saturday morning, but first up was Frank Baron, whose book on Faust I had borrowed from my university library. Frank spoke on Christoffel von Sichel’s engraving of Faust (1608), placing it in historical context. Frank made perhaps the most memorable comment of the conference when he said that although a lot of bad things had been said about the devil at this conference, he would not apologize for the devil, since he had made his living talking about the same! Carsten Wilke who examined the intersection of geometry and Kabbalah in the work of the French kabbalist Paul Yvon. Yvon was interesting because he incorporated eastern mystical traditions and pagan ideas into his fusion of Judaism and Christianity. I was the last speaker of the panel and looked at the earliest title of Rembrandt’s *Faust* or *Scholar Looking at a Magic Disk* as supportive of Shelley Perlove’s millenarian interpretation of the print. In addition, I suggested a possible link between Agrippa’s *De vanitate* and Rembrandt’s studio through the person of Heiman Dullaert.

By the time the panel ended, I felt a need for a break, and since none of the morning's other panels dealt directly with my research interests, I took the opportunity to explore a bit more of Szeged on foot.

The final panel I attended was "From Tradition to Science". Joscelyn Godwin started things off, presenting four aspects of color that have been utilized in various contexts throughout history. Joscelyn focused on correspondences, polarity, the spectrum and complementaries, suggesting there is much yet to be explored from an esoteric point of view in the topic of color. Karl Baier followed with a presentation on "Carl Happich's Method as Meeting Point between Esotericism, Protestantism, and Psychotherapy". Happich, who died in 1948, thought that western meditation was "too rational" and instead applied "mindful breathing" techniques to the contemplation of symbols. Egil Asprem finished the session with his examination of "clairvoyant science", as described in Besant and Leadbeater's *Occult Chemistry* (1908). Egil proposed three different approaches for interpreting occult chemistry: a charitable hermeneutic, an agnostic hermeneutic, and a suspicious hermeneutic.

And with the close of the final two panels on Saturday, the scholarly portion of the conference also closed, leaving participants free to enjoy more of Szeged, Budapest, or the rest of Hungary, or to return home with rich memories. A very warm "thank-you" to Gyorgy and the rest of our Hungarian hosts!

Cecile Wilson

