

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

Newsletter Spring 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 a shared pleasure among scholars of esotericism to witness the continual growth of the academic field generally designated 'Western esotericism'. This growth can clearly be seen by the many conference announcements, which have been received and listed below in this newsletter. One of the continual debates in relation to the demarcation and growth of this academic field has, however, been how important and useful it is to use the geographical designation 'Western' in relation to esotericism. Antoine Faivre clearly construed the field as a Western phenomenon in his *Access to Western esotericism* (1994), because, as he argued, it was only during the Renaissance in the West, that esotericism became an independent tradition - whereas in the East, for example, what we might call Eastern esotericism is inseparable from religion. Faivre did this, in part, to set the study of Western esotericism on a more stringent historical theoretical basis in opposition to Pierre A. Riffard's *L'Ésotérisme* (1990), in which Riffard had traced esotericism to nearly all ages and all cultures as he defined esotericism as the expression of a common anthropological faculty. Since these early days in the conception of Western esotericism the debate has continued. Below you will find Peter Wilson's informed article 'Ontology, Conflict and Cannibals', which discusses the usefulness of retaining the designation 'Western' as this will avoid reading Western frameworks into other cultures.

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



ARTICLES

Ontology, Conflict and Cannibals

by Peter Wilson, MA

Western European religious and esoteric studies focus much effort to define and classify the boundaries of the discipline. Works by Faivre (1994), Hanegraaff (1998), and von Stuckrad (2005), and conference papers (e.g. Pasi, Hanegraaff, Asperim, Granholm, Crow, IAHR 2010, Toronto), exemplify the various arguments to define and bound the discipline, as well as examine the epistemology of the historical and sociological methodologies.

Regardless of whatever perspective one takes, it is important to define the boundaries of Western Esotericism and Religion in order to ensure that the concepts inherent in Western thought and practice are not applied to non-Western societies, as well as to provide a consistent basis to filter out European concepts adopted into non-European societies. The application of Western Euro-centric religious and esoteric principles during the colonization of the Americas led to a fundamental misunderstanding of the pre-contact ontology of the indigenous people. These misapplications ultimately resulted in the suppression of traditional religious, esoteric, social, and economic practices, and were accompanied by the assimilation of Christian-based understandings into the indigenous population (see Cole 1985, Kew and Goddard 1974, Maud 1982, Rohner and Bettauer 1970, and Canadian Museum of Civilization 2011). This situation is well documented among the peoples of the Northwest Coast of the Americas.

For centuries, Western Europeans have struggled to comprehend the fundamental world view of the indigenous peoples of the Americas (Kew and Goddard 1974). While the Western European governance oversaw the eradication of indigenous social structures, economies, languages, populations, and medical practices, the religious and educational institutions served up a widespread assimilation of the Indigenous populations, casting aside traditional religious ceremonials, often viewed as savage and demonic, and replacing them with Christian practices (Canadian Museum of Civilization 2011 and Wilson 2011). Hundreds of years of assimilation have clouded the pre-contact religious traditions and practices. In addition, these post-contact years have hidden the esoteric knowledge of the underlying principals of the indigenous ontology in the recesses of time. The writings of missionaries, religious scholars and government agents reflect an analysis of indigenous practice through the lens of Western European ontology. These misunderstandings and misinterpretations can be traced to the incapacity of Western European religious and educational scholars to understand the ontology of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas and have been used to argue for the Westernization of the Americas (Canadian Museum of Civilization 2011 and Wilson 2011).

Contrary to religious traditions common in Western Europe at the time of contact, the creation ontology of the Northwest Coast, found in the origin myths and tales, shows no indication that the world began through the direction of God. There is no evidence of a Western European Christian concept of God nor a concept of dualism. The creation stories

in the Northwest Coast begin with a world populated only by people and no other living creatures. These “first” people create their world through transformation. They place the sun in the sky and transform themselves into the diverse animal populations through hard work, ritual practice, and instruction. Examples of these stories are found in Boas (1966 and 1969), Hukari, Peter, and White (1977), Maud (1982), Touchie (1977), Whitaker and Wallas (1981), Thomas and Wilson (1978). Dance rituals, an important component in indigenous religious practice, re-enact creation stories that demonstrate people turning into animal form. At the beginning of such a ritual, the dancers come out as people. They then “transform” into an animal form by donning masks and animal regalia. Transformation masks, such as the one exemplified below, are used in dance rituals and reveal the “human” original state of the animal.

			
Kwigwis (sea eagle in animal state)	Mask Opening to reveal human state	Mask Opening to reveal human state	Kwaigwis (mask in human state)

Kwigwis Sea Eagle Mask, carved by Simon Dick

In addition to the transformation dancers, there are a group of dancers known as cannibal dancers. The cannibal dancers come out as people and “eat” people, representing the principal that when we eat an animal, we are fundamentally eating a relative (data from Wilson, Collected Field Notes, and also noted in Wilson, 2011 and forthcoming).

The first Western European colonizers on the Northwest Coast of the Americas included traders, religious missionaries, and government officials (Cole 1985). This group often viewed the ceremonial practices of the indigenous population through a Western European lens and attempted to superimpose a dualist analysis of indigenous ontology and a concept of a Western European Christian god. The transformation dances, for example, were thought to be enactments of daemonic possession, whereby a spirit would enter the body of the dancer and make them behave like an animal (Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2011). The totem poles were perceived as “idols” instead of representations of the family crests of the owner (Sewid, 2011). Translations of the Bible and other Christian materials, including hymns and prayer books, developed new words and phrases to refer to concepts not found in the indigenous societies (see, for example, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge 1888). In the Northwest Coast language Kwakwaka, for example, the word for god was translated into “chief in the sky.” In addition, traditional characters in myths were given “supernatural” capacity in their English translations. The name for the character who assisted people with the transformation is often translated as “creator,” even though in the original language of the stories the word

makes no reference to “creation.” In both Kwakwala and Dididaht, a language related to Kwakwala, the name means “the man who came from the North,” which can be noted in translation including Thomas and Wilson 1978 and Boas 1969). These “transformation assistants,” or ritualists, are people who assist with ritual and represent a kind of “proto-shaman like” character (Wilson, 2011 and forthcoming).

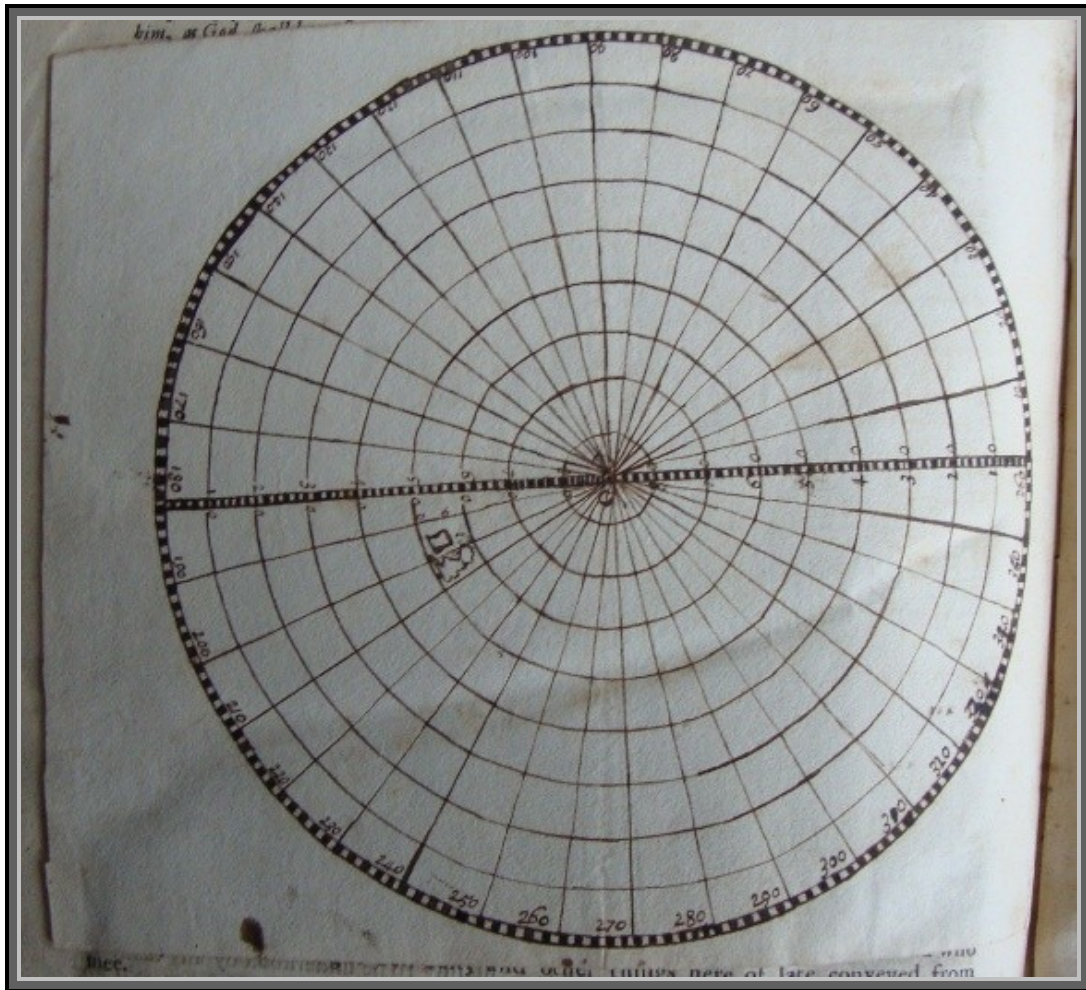
Among the people of the Northwest Coast of the Americas, there is no need for spirit interlocutors, a spirit world, or a god. The sense of “oneness” among living things, therefore, is based on an understanding that all living things are descended from the original people, unlike a Christian concept, which would view living things as being created by an external god (see Wilson 2011 and forthcoming). On closer examination, the ontology of the Northwest Coast of the Americas varies significantly from that of Western Europe, despite the fact that it is possible to explain some indigenous practices based on the surface level. In order to develop a construction of the ontology and esoteric practices of a non-European society, one needs to develop an internally consistent, historically based analysis that is able to filter out European-centric analyses and assimilated Christian beliefs and practices. An understanding of Western Esotericism, therefore, can aid in this research by better delineating the boundaries. This is particularly important in reconstructing the Proto-Ontology of the Americas, which is made difficult through hundreds of years of the Christianization of societies that were non-literate in the pre-contact period.

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It is well known that John Dee's magic had some "imperialistic" facets, but any comments on the meaning of this obscure diagram are more than welcome.



CONFERENCES

Sofia Centre Conference: Maps of the Psyche

Dates: Sunday, April 8th to Tuesday, April 10th

Location: Zurich, Switzerland

Cost: 750 CHF (snacks and most meals included)

Lecturers: Liz Greene, Nick Campion and Bernadette Brady.

More details are at <http://www.historyofastrology.org.uk/Events/Psyche/index.html>



Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association Conference: Tarot

Dates: Wednesday, April 20th to Saturday, April 23rd

Location: San Antonio, Texas, USA

Cost: 50-200 USD, dependent upon category and time of registration

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

Contact Person: Emily E. Auger, PhD

Website: <http://emilyeauger.weebly.com/cfp-tarot-at-the-pcaaca-conference.html>

Email: augere@canada.com; augeremily@gmail.com

Conference website: <http://pcaaca.org/conference/national.php>



Science and Magic: Ways of Knowing in the Renaissance

Dates: Friday, April 29th to Saturday, April 30th

Location: Princeton University; Princeton, New Jersey, USA

Keynote Speaker: Bruce Moran, Department of History, University of Nevada, Reno

In his *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, Pico della Mirandola described two forms of magic. There was that branch of sorcery consisting “wholly in the operations and powers of demons,” as well as a more benign craft pertaining to none other than “the highest realization of natural philosophy.” To many Renaissance thinkers, magic was a legitimate field of study as well as a potential threat to established orthodoxies. Inspired by this formulation, this interdisciplinary conference aims to consider scientific thought alongside magic and domains that modern vocabulary would describe as pseudoscience, such as alchemy and astrology. The conference will feature papers related to diverse ways of magical and scientific knowing in the early modern world.

Topics include:

- Distinctions between magic, science and pseudoscience in theory and practice.
- Distinctions between magic, science and pseudoscience in theory and practice.
- Forms of scientific literature and artifacts.
- The transmission of licit and illicit magic; the role of natural philosophy and magic in education.

- The attitudes and policies of secular and ecclesiastical authorities.
- Practical magic: fortune-telling, amulets, etc.
- Early modern European and American witch-hunts and witchcraft trials.
- Alchemical theory and practice.
- The articulation and reception of prophecies.
- The commerce of magic, the financial circumstances of men of science or magicians.
- Fraudulent magic or science, cons and hoaxes.
- Encyclopedic texts, indexing schemes and the organization of knowledge.
- Artistic, literary or musical representations of magic, science or the thirst for knowledge.
- Gender in magic, science, or pseudoscience.
- Magic in the New World and beyond; extra-European influences on Renaissance magic and science.

This conference is conducted under the auspices of the Renaissance Studies Program at Princeton University.

Contact People: Scott Francis (smfranci@princeton.edu); Jebro Lit (jlit@princeton.edu)



Daimonic Imagination: Uncanny Intelligence

Dates: Thursday, May 6th to Friday, May 7th

Location: University of Kent; Canterbury, UK

Cost: 15 to 60 GBP, dependent upon package chosen

Deadline for Conference Registration: April 15th

The Centre for the Study of Myth at the University of Kent is hosting an interdisciplinary conference dedicated to sharing and discussing new insights into inspired creativity. In many traditions the fount of creative vision and the source of divinatory insight is located in an intelligent 'other', whether this is termed god, angel, spirit, muse or daimon, or whether it is seen as an aspect of the human imagination and the activation of the 'unconscious' in a Jungian sense. From the artistic genius to the tarot reader, the sense of communication with another order of reality is commonly attested. Such communication may take the form of a flash of intuitive insight, psychic or clairvoyant ability, or spiritual possession. In art and literature many forms have been given to the daimonic intelligence, from angels to aliens, and in the realm of new age practices encounters with spiritual beings are facilitated through an increasing variety of methods including shamanism, hypnotherapy, mediumship, psychedelics, channelling and spirit materialisation. The conference is not concerned with 'proving' or 'disproving' the existence of such beings. Rather, it will focus on the theme of how the 'numinous other' is conveyed and depicted, how its voice is heard, how it informs, and has always informed, human experience.

For conference details see:

http://www.kent.ac.uk/secl/researchcentres/myth/events/daimonic_imagination.html

Contact People: William Rowlandson (w.rowlandson@kent.ac.uk) and Angela Voss (a.voss@kent.ac.uk); www.cosmology-divination.com



Forty-Sixth International Congress on Medieval Studies: Alchemy in the Literature, Art, and Natural Philosophy of the 14th Century

Dates: Wednesday, May 12th to Saturday, May 15th

Location: Kalamazoo, MI, USA

Session is co-sponsored by the Societas Alchimica and the 14th Century Society. The conference topics have been broadened to include alchemy and related topics.

Contact Person: Teresa Burns at burnst@uwplatt.edu



Sophia Centre Conference: Origins: the Babylonian and Egyptian Contribution to Western Astrology

Dates: Friday, May 13th to Sunday, May 15th

Location: Mansfield, Massachusetts, USA

Cost: 625 USD (snacks and most meals included)

Lecturers: Nick Campion and Bernadette Brady (Sophia Centre); Dr. Dorian Greenbaum (Guest Lecturer)

For more details, go to <http://www.historyofastrology.org.uk/Events/Origins/>



Sophia Centre Conference: Sky and Symbol

Dates: Saturday, June 4th to Sunday, June 5th

Location: Bath, UK

Cost: 65 GBP for both days; 45 GBP for one day

The ninth annual Sofia Centre conference, 'Sky and Symbol', will be held in Bath UK, and will address the role, nature and function of celestial symbolism. The keynote speakers will be Liz Greene (University of Wales Trinity Saint David and University of Bristol), Kristin Lippincott (The Exhibitions Team), Ilana Wartenburg (University College, London), Gary Wells (Ithaca College) and Elliot Wolfson (New York University). The web site is at <http://www.historyofastrology.org.uk/conferences/symbolism/>



Seventh International Congress of Arctic Social Sciences (ICASS VII): Imagining the Supernatural North

Dates: Wednesday, June 22nd to Sunday, June 26th

Location: Akureyri, Iceland

The Seventh International Congress of Arctic Social Sciences (ICASS VII), takes place in Akureyri, Iceland, June 22-26, 2011. "Imagining the Supernatural North" intends contribute to the ongoing discussion on "perceptions of Northernness" in the humanities and social sciences. In the course of the oft-quoted "spatial turn", the increased awareness of spatiality and its implications, scholars have devoted considerable attention to the cultural meaning of northernness. Which stereotypes, symbolisms and ideological connotations have been ascribed to the North in different historical periods, by different actors and in different discourse genres? How have the North and its inhabitants been imagined, constructed and described?

As a contribution to this debate, the panel will explore the notion of the North as a realm of the supernatural. From antiquity to the present, the North has been associated with sorcerous inhabitants, mythical tribes, metaphysical forces of good and evil and all kinds of supernatural qualities and occurrences. Such an approach, however, needs to bear in mind that the border between the natural and the supernatural has been viewed differently in different discursive traditions, and that a sharp delineation is often impossible.

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- The myth of the Hyperboreans in Ancient Greece
- The motif of "evil descending from the North" in the Old Testament
- Glæsisvellir and the mythical realms of the North in medieval Scandinavian cosmology
- Mount Hekla and other alleged gateways to hell
- "Northern witchcraft" in early modern demonology and juridical practice
- "Ex oriente lux" versus "Ex septentrione lux" - rivalling interpretations of the East and the North as origins of human culture
- The "pure Aryan North" in (Neo-)Nazi mysticism
- The spirituality of the North in modern esotericism and neo-paganism
- Northern shamanism as a topic of scholarship, indigenous self-perception and popular discourses
- Mysteries of the North in literature (e.g. H. C. Andersen's "Snow Queen", C. S. Lewis' "The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe", Philip Pullman's "His Dark Materials" series etc.)
- Gendering the supernatural north (contrasting images of female witches and male sorcerers, sexual stereotypes of the "icy seductress", "frigid beauty")
- Supernatural interpretations of natural phenomena (polar night and midnight sun, Northern lights etc.)

Additional information on ICASS VII can be found at the website of the International Arctic Social Sciences Association (<http://www.iassa.org/icass-vii>). Students, indigenous participants and participants from Russia and the neighbouring states may apply for travel funding.

Contact Person: Stefan Donecker, Working Group Arctic and Subarctic (A.A.S.), Vienna



ESSWE 3: Lux in Tenebris: The Visual and Symbolic from late Antiquity to the Present

Dates: Wednesday, July 6th to Sunday, July 10th

Location: University of Szeged; Szeged, Hungary

The European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism in cooperation with the University of Szeged and its Cultural Iconology and Semiography Research Group announces its third international conference on "The Visual and the Symbolic in Western Esotericism". Papers will focus on verbal and visual representations of Western esotericism from late Antiquity to the present age.

Invited keynote speakers include:

- Michael J. B. Allen (UCLA)
- Lina Bolzoni (Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa)
- Pia Brinzeu (University of the West, Timisoara)
- Moshe Idel (Hebrew University, Jerusalem)

Read more on the conference homepage:

www.staff.u-szeged.hu/~geszonyi/ESSWE3-2011/ESSWE3-main.htm

Szeged, declared a free royal town in 1246, is the fourth largest city in Hungary, a college-centre, with many institutions of higher and secondary education, museums, and theatres. The University, established in 1921, is the second largest in Hungary, with about thirty thousand students. After a devastating flood in 1879, the inner city was rebuilt in neo-classical, eclectic, and spectacular Art Nouveau styles. Situated on the River Tisza, Szeged is also famous for its spas, and is the home of paprika. The city is connected by direct motorway to most parts of Europe, and can be reached in two hours by train from Budapest's Ferihegy International Airport.

See: <http://www.szegedportal.hu>.



Centre for Spirituality Studies: Manifestations of Evil: an Interdisciplinary Conference

Dates: Tuesday, July 12th to Wednesday, July 13th

Location: Ravenscar, North Yorkshire, UK

The Centre for Spirituality Studies at the University of Hull is pleased to announce that it is hosting an interdisciplinary conference on "Manifestations of Evil" from July 12-13, 2011. The conference will be held at the Raven Hall Country House Hotel, Ravenscar, North Yorkshire, UK. <http://www.ravenhall.co.uk/page/home.html>

Keynote speakers include Professor Alan Norrie, University of Warwick.

<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/staff/academic/norrie/>

Sessions will cover multiple perspectives on occurrences of evil in contemporary society, including:

- Restorative justice and evil
- Uses of the concept of evil
- Representations of evil
- Child abuse in the Catholic Church
- Child pornography
- Genocide
- Terrorism
- Torture

Contact Person: Claire Gregory, Administrator, Centre for Spirituality Studies, Department of Social Sciences, The University of Hull, Hull, HU6 7RX, UK.

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Esoteric Traditions In The Ancient And Modern World

Dates: Tuesday, July 12th to Sunday, July 24th

Location: Alexandria, Egypt

The conference will be held over six days in Alexandria. An optional three day cruise on the Nile and three days in Cairo is available.

The purpose of the Conference will be to examine the source and foundations of the mystery and esoteric traditions; their expressions and nuances in the ancient and contemporary world; and the interface between ancient wisdom and modern scientific paradigms. As we will be returning to the cradle of so-called 'Western Esotericism' for this event, the Conference will be focusing upon the Hermeticism of Alexandria, neo-Platonism, former ancient Mysteries, and the modern Theosophical Movement, in view of their phenomenology, social impact, and nuances in the shaping of cultural and spiritual aspects of the contemporary western world. Special emphasis will be given to the Theosophical Society: its foundational structures and orientation, successions, impact, and its role as an artery in the continuation of esoteric culture and Higher Age teachings within the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries.

Call for submissions: Deadline 30th June 2011

Suggested topics, not compulsory:

- Ancient Mystery Traditions.
- The Hermeticism of Alexandria.
- Neo-Platonism.
- The Star-Lore of Ancient Egypt.

- Theosophical Connections with Egyptian Traditions.
- The Brotherhood of Luxor and its influence on the Theosophical Society.
- Successions in the Theosophical Society (The Judge Case, etc.)
- The Theosophical Movement in the 3rd Millennium.
- Ancient Wisdom & Modern Science.
- Modern Physics & the Secret Doctrine.

Categories of Submissions: There are five categories of submissions: papers, panels, workshops, round-tables and short documentaries. All are due *before* July 2011.

- **Papers:** All online submissions must be in one of four formats: MS Word for Windows, MS Word for Mac, PDF, or Rich Text Format. All tables, graphs, and pictures associated with your submission must be included with the main text in a single document. Submissions must be completed and received before July 2011. Additional information: Title, author(s) short biography, 200-words abstract.
- **Panel Session:** Panel title, description, chair/ discussant, presentation titles, abstracts, and any other required information. It is required for presenters to submit a 150-word abstract; you also need to prepare a 400-word rationale for your panel proposal and a 75-word panel description for the conference program. Panels can contain up to four papers with no more than 1.000 words each paper. These must be completed before July 2011.
- **Workshops:** You should submit an overview of the workshop structure, including key topics to be addressed, the equipment necessary, duration, aims and a 150-word abstract. These must be completed before July 2011.
- **Round-tables:** Round-table proposals (same submission criteria as panel proposals) and must be completed before July 2011.
- **Short Documentaries:** Short documentaries between 5 to 15 minutes, must be submitted on DVD NTSC or PAL (please test before sending). These must be received before July 2011. Short documentaries must be available for screening during the Conference on July 2011.

Eligibility: You do not need to be a member of any Theosophical organization to submit a paper or proposal for the conference. Send your proposal to: stoa.hypatia@gmail.com

Conference attendance: If your panel, paper, workshop or round-table proposal is accepted for the conference, you have a commitment to register for and attend the conference and perform your assigned role. If extenuating circumstances prevent you from attending, you should find a substitute to perform your duties and notify the program committee.

Conference registration: Submission of your paper or proposal does NOT automatically register you for the conference itself. If your paper or proposal is accepted for presentation at the conference "Esoteric Traditions in the Ancient and Modern World" you will be notified and then must register for the conference and pay the conference fee. Details about the conference registration will be soon available.

E-mail address: Each conference participant must use one and only one e-mail address for all submissions.

Program Committee: Alistair Coombs (UK), Nikos Fokas (GR), George Georgiades (GR), Erica Georgiades (GR), J.S. Gordon (UK).

Conference chairwoman: Erica Georgiades.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: 30 694 3682003 OR

stoa.hypatia@gmail.com

http://www.hypatia.gr/Alexandria_Conference.html



The International Alchemy Conference

Dates: Friday, September 16th to Sunday, September 18th

Location: Long Beach Convention Center; Long Beach, California, USA

This year's conference is hosted by the International Alchemy Guild and the Modern Mystery School. The conference will be a high energy, hands on, interactive event that supports and promotes education, spiritualism, and peace. The conference provides a venue to help individuals explore their greater purpose.

We welcome you to join us at what is sure be an unforgettable event. Stay connected with us at <http://www.alchemyconference.com>



German Studies Association Conference

Panel: The Matter of Spirit: Plasma, Aether, Urstoff and the Emergence of German Modernism

Dates: Thursday, September 22nd to Sunday, September 25th

Location: Louisville, Kentucky, USA

Nineteenth century Germany played host to a whole range of approaches designed to conceptualize the material foundations of psychic functions. Beginning around 1800 with Friedrich Schelling's Naturphilosophie, and its extraordinarily influential equation of world-soul with primal matter, the interest in a physical science of spirit culminated, by the second half of the century, in the invention of new disciplines like evolutionary biology (Ernst Haeckel, Thomas Henry Huxley) and experimental psychology (Wilhelm Wundt, Alfred Binet), which sought to study the empirical substrate of mental life. The phenomenon did not, however, remain confined to the natural sciences. Concepts like "plasma" and "aether," which played the role of substrate for the scientists, soon also figured prominently in the context of occult experiments (Albert v. Schrenck-Notzing), mystical theosophies (Rudolf Steiner, Bruno Wille), philosophical speculations (Arthur

Schopenhauer, Friedrich Nietzsche), modernist poetics (Robert Müller, Thomas Mann), and avant-garde media aesthetics (Raoul Hausmann, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy). The panel seeks to explore the significance of this widespread fascination with spiritual "matter" for the development of German Modernism.

Contact People : Sarah Pourciau (pourciau@princeton.edu), Tobias Wilke (tw2284@columbia.edu), and Lisa Cerami (lmcerami@gmail.com).



Satanism in Western culture: International conference on the Devil's disciples

Dates: Sunday, September 25th to Tuesday, September 27th

Location: Stockholm University; Stockholm, Sweden

Satanism is a subject that has always drawn a lot of media attention as well as interest from the general public. Scholarly studies of the subject, however, have more often focused on socially constructed "Satanic Panics" than on Satanism as a religious alternative in itself. Recently, this has begun to change, and anthologies such as *Contemporary Religious Satanism* (Ed. Jesper A Petersen, Ashgate, 2009) have started to fill the gaps in scholarly knowledge concerning Satanism. A further attempt to remedy the situation was made when the first ever international scholarly conference on Satanism was organized in Trondheim, Norway, in 2009. The conference was a great success, and resulted in an anthology that will be published by Oxford University Press later this year. In September 2011, we welcome you to Stockholm, Sweden for the follow-up to 2009's gathering of specialists.

Keynote speaker: Marco Pasi

Call for Papers: Deadline for abstracts is May 22, 2011.

Submit your abstract to: per.faxneld@rel.su.se and kennet.granholm@rel.su.se (remember to submit abstracts to *both* organisers).

Papers dealing with most aspects of Satanism are welcome (including Satanism in literature, cinema, etc). However, we discourage papers treating "the Satanic panic", "Satanic ritual abuse", etc, as these themes have received sufficient scholarly attention.

Conference fee will be announced later.

<http://www.erg.su.se/pub/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=16068>



Religion, Nature and Art

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

Location: Vatican Museums; Vatican City, Italy

Anticipated Cost: 100 euros; 50 euros for students and those demonstrating financial need

This joint conference, sponsored by the Ethnological Museum of the Vatican Museums, headed by prof. Nicola Mapelli, and the International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture (ISSRNC), 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," "Spirituality-based Environmental Activism, Nature and Art." Some general areas of presentation could include: art symbolizing religious aspects of nature, nature itself as religious art, nature-themed religious art, art that expresses religious-based resistance to environmental destruction.

The conference will also include two unique opportunities to view art in the Vatican Museums. We will visit the exhibit "Rituals of Life: the culture and spirituality of aboriginal Australians" with the curator, prof. Nicola Mapelli (conference co-director), and co-curator, 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."

Call for Papers: Deadline for proposals is June 1st, 2011.

Proposals should be submitted to Fr. Nicola Mapelli, diretn.musei@scv.va for review, and cc to Katherine Aigner, katherine.aigner@anu.edu.au . Proposals should be no more than 250 words in length and should indicate directly how they relate to the theme.

Contact People: Fr. Mapelli (diretn.musei@scv.va) and conference co-coordinator Dr. Laura Hobgood-Oster, hoboster@southwestern.edu.

For regular updates regarding the preparation of the conference, please see the website of the ISSRNC at www.religionandnature.com/society.

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American Academy of Religion

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

Location: San Francisco, USA

Every year the American Academy of Religion (AAR) hosts a session organized by the group on Western esotericism. The next conference will take place November 19-22 in San Francisco. This year's focus will be on the following themes:

- The material history of esotericism
- Objects and instruments used in esoteric practices
- Esotericism and politics
- Putting "heterodox" aspects of Mormonism in context – preexistence, reincarnation, and apocalypticism in Western Esotericism (for a possible cosponsored session with the Mormon Studies Consultation)

For more information, please see

http://rsnonline.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=435&Itemid=513).

Marco Pasi, co-chair of the Western Esotericism Group



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sophia Centre

The Sophia Centre is now at the renamed University of Wales Trinity Saint David and has a new URL:

<http://www.tsd.ac.uk/en/sophia/>

There will be three Sophia Centre conferences in 2011 (see above), including two promotional conferences for the MA in Cultural Astronomy and Astrology, one in Zurich and one in Mansfield, Massachusetts, the latter in easy reach of Boston and New York. Both will appeal to potential students but, we should stress, all are welcome.

Also, a reminder that the Proceedings of the 2009 conference on 'Cosmologies' are for sale at

<http://www.sophiacentrepublishing.com/NewPublications.html>

Nick Campion,

Sophia Centre for the Study of Cosmology in Culture, School of Archaeology, History and Anthropology, University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

<http://www.tsd.ac.uk/en/sophia/>



AWARDS

ESSWE PhD Thesis Prize

The prizewinner for 2011 will be notified in May 2011 and will receive an award of €500 and a certificate, to be presented at the ESSWE conference in Szeged, 6-10 July 2011. The thesis will also be recommended for publication in the ARIES Book Series, though the final decision on publication will be taken by the ARIES Book Series editorial board, not the Prize Committee. If it deems that no thesis reaches an appropriate standard, the Prize Committee will not award a prize.

The Prize Committee consists of:

- Andreas Kilcher, Zurich (Chair)
- Boaz Huss, Ben Gurion University of the Negev
- Helmut Zander, Ruhr-Universität, Bochum



The Richard Kieckhefer Prize

The Richard Kieckhefer Prize was established by the Societas Magica in 2009 to honor Professor Kieckhefer's contributions to the field and his mentoring of younger scholars. It is awarded annually for an unpublished article by a recent PhD (within 2 years of graduation), in any area of the scholarly study of magic, witchcraft, or related fields, judged by the selection committee to be of outstanding quality. In exceptional cases consideration will also be given to graduate student submissions. The prize is supported by Penn Press Journals and the Societas Magica.

The winner will be announced at the Societas Magica meeting in May 2011 as well as in its newsletter and on its website. The winning entry will also be published in the journal *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* and the author will receive a cash prize of \$500.

Frank Klaassen, President
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